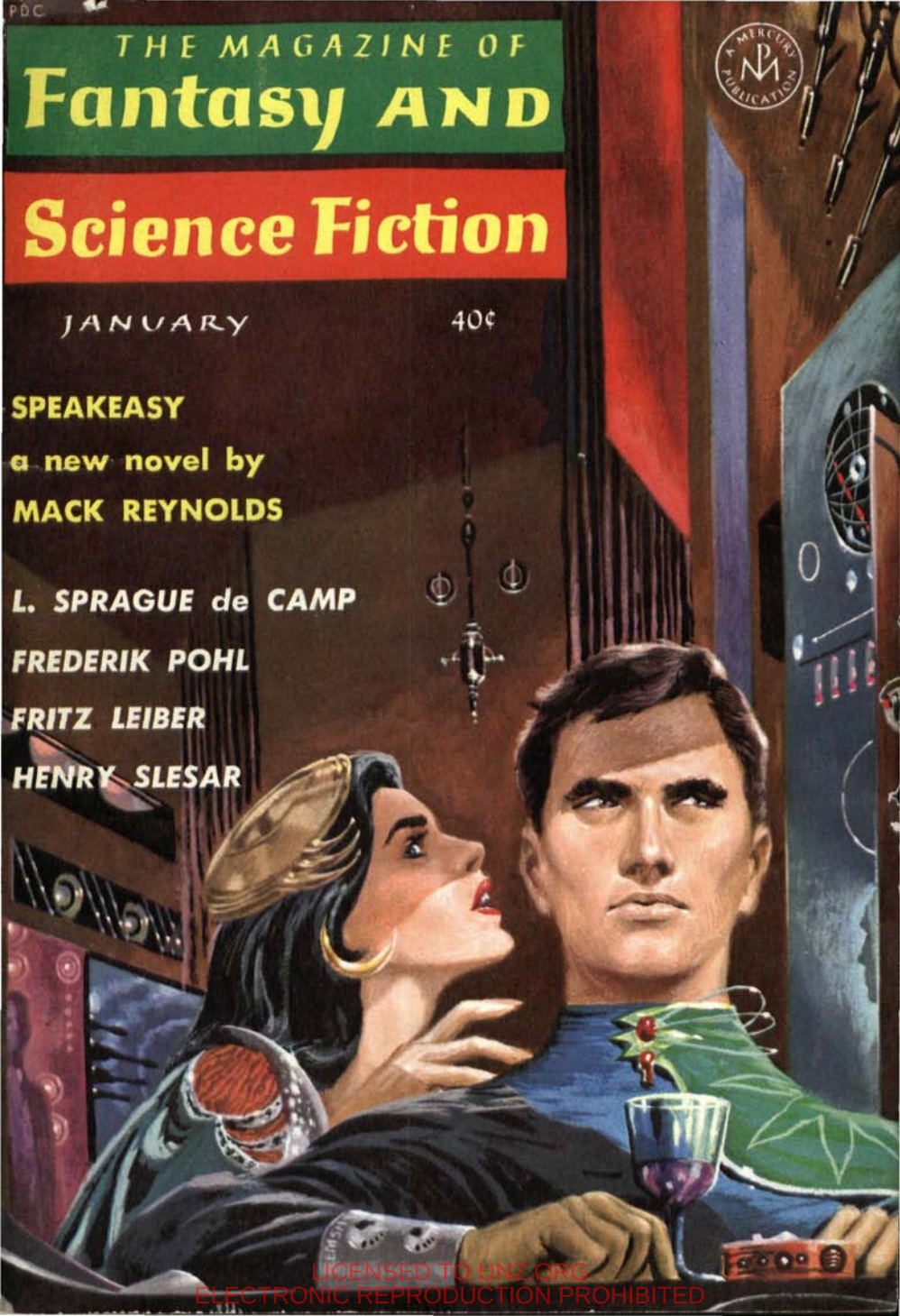

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Fantasy and Science Fiction

JANUARY *Including Venture Science Fiction*

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In this issue . . .

. . . *Witnesseth* **FRITZ LEIBER** with a short prophecy, previously announced and slightly delayed, but worth the wait; **MACK REYNOLDS** with a novel which is a long prophecy—this one of a future "scientific" society, delineated in detail and in depth: our cover story, in fact. **FRED POHL,** who last month gave us a good article, this month gives us a good story, concerning which only our iron self-control prevents a comment about "geeks bearing gifts." **L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP,** linguist, novelist, and traveler, takes us on safari for a dragon hunt; Britain's **P. M. HUBBARD** is our guide for a fearsome visit aboard the strangest vessel to stand down the coast of Cornwall since the days of the Phoenicians; **HENRY SLESAR** offers a modern answer to some questions which perplexed the ancients; and for those who like to test their scientific knowledge there is a short quiz by **JOSEPH STACEY.** We offer fewer titles than commonly, this issue, but the wordage is the same; and the quality, we trust, at least no less.

Coming next month . . .

. . . is **RICHARD MATHESON**'s first appearance here in a long time, with a bitter and off-trail narration of music—and machinery. The theme is (we say it to our shame as an American) one which is constantly appropriate, and has been since 1619. A department store at night has been used, we believe, as a story background only by John Collier. Using the same background, and also with an atmosphere of crime, but in a vastly different direction, is a story by **JAMES WHITE** of Northern Ireland. Seldom have detection and straight Science Fiction been so successfully blended. And there will be a long story, based on the ancient traditions of Jewish mysticism, by the late and alas now neglected **ISRAEL ZANGWILL.**

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Introduction to P. M. Hubbard's THE GOLDEN BRICK

We said of a writer in our first review for The Magazine, "Mr. ——— is not Montague Rhodes James—but then, who is?" The answer may well be, "P.M. Hubbard." It is not a case of reincarnation, for Mr. Hubbard was a grown man when the late Provost of Eton died; it is certainly not a case of imitation: the author of the poignant BOTANY BAY (F&SF, Feb., 1955) does not need imitate anyone—and, in fact, does not. It is simply that no one else writing in the long generation which has passed since James's death has until now equalled, or even come close to equalling, that mastery of the historical and the horrid which made the author of Ghost Stories of An Antiquary *so justly famous. Mr. Hubbard, on request, writes of himself, "Born in England, 9.11.10. Brought up and educated in Channel Islands. Classical degree, Oxford. Newdigate Prize,* 1933. Government service in India (Punjab) 1934 to 1947. Part of the steel frame—personal rule on horseback over hundreds of square miles—that sort of thing, including capital powers as a criminal judge. Home in 1947. (A month's home-leave in 13 years—the war got in the way.) Various administrative jobs, including, latterly, chief executive of a national manufacturers' organization. Started writing for PUNCH in 1950, and have since contributed hundreds of things, from Parliamentary reports to sentimental verse. Now for the second time trying to make a go of it as a whole-time writer. Anything from children's fiction to industrial reports. My first novel (a thriller of sorts) just accepted for publication this autumn. Married, three children, two grandchildren. Like making things with my hands, planting and tending trees,*

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* The Newdigate Prize of twenty-one guineas (and priceless prestige) is awarded annually for a poem by an undergraduate of Oxford; it figured in the late Lord Dunsany's THE CLUB SECRETARY (F&SF, July, 1956) in connection with the phrase, ". . . a rose-red city, half as old as time," from John William Burgon's Newdigate Prize poem, PEDRA. Among the other winners was Oscar Wilde.

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swimming, sailing. Have cottage in Cornwall. Expect to die early in 1965, but I may crawl away over the sea yet . . ." We trust and hope that Mr. Hubbard's prophecy in the first part of this last sentence will prove false; for illumination of the second part it will be necessary for readers to complete the reading of this story. This, we predict, will be impossible to avoid doing, once they have well begun this lovely and horrifying tale of the summer resident, the black ship, the white, white shipmaster, the thing in the hold which droned and wrought, and the golden brick . . .

THE GOLDEN BRICK

by P. M. Hubbard

PENHARROW IS ONE OF THOSE Cornish fishing villages that have long ceased to look anywhere but inland for their livelihood. The sea is still there, and the granite-walled harbour, and the granite cottages with roofs of local slate cemented into a solid sheet that is as impermeable and almost as heavy as lead flashing. There are boats in the harbour, and the boats go to sea, weather permitting, and some of them even bring in mackerel and lobsters for quick cash sales at holiday prices. But the money comes from up-country. London, and Birmingham and Manchester make the money and bring it to Penharrow to spend. The Cornish are still a curiously simple people, considering the natural advantages heaven has given them. They have preserved their Duchy as much from a natural conservatism as from any commercial instinct; and they give their visitors good value for money because they are naturally hospitable, even on a cash basis. London and Birmingham and Manchester like getting value for their money, and so continue to bring it to Penharrow to spend. The thing is self-perpetuating so long as the Cornish don't lose their simplicity and over-reach themselves.

On the afternoon of Good Friday my family went on an expedition inland and left me to my own devices. I throw in the family, because this too is supposed to indicate stability and reliability, though in my experience marriage,

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like other restrictive practices, is a great breeding-ground of untruth. I had the dinghy out with the outboard, and was going to potter round into a neighbouring cove and, if the sun was hot enough, risk a quick swim. Given fine weather the Cornish air is as soft as silk at Easter, but the Gulf Stream doesn't come this way noticeably, and the sea will defy any but the adventurous or masochistic for some months yet. Not being particularly either, I preferred to get somewhere where I could take my time over it and change my mind as often as I wanted before I committed myself. Hence the idea of pottering round into a neighbouring cove.

The ketch came round the headland just as I headed out of the harbour. She was motoring, of course, but the mainsail and mizzen were stowed along the booms and there was a jib on a roller. She looked thoroughly seaworthy. She was completely black, even the cabin-top, and must have been all of twenty tons. To say, now, that she looked sinister is almost certainly being wise after the event, but she didn't look like a yachting holiday. She looked workmanlike, lived-in and slightly evasive. Curiosity being the first rule of the amateur sailor, I headed towards her.

I was still some distance from her when I saw that she had lost way and all but stopped. A man climbed out of the cockpit, ran forward and let go an anchor just as the ebb tide took hold of her. She slipped back to the length of cable he gave her and sat there, tide-rode. She would still have plenty under her, even at full low. It was all very neat and efficient. I sat in the middle of the boat with the extension tiller in my hand and my bows well in the water. I know it is amusing to sit in the stern-sheets and wave your bows in the air, but it doesn't really pay, and I have got past the stage of wanting to be amusing in a boat, or anywhere else much for that matter. The man stood in the bows of the ketch and watched me coming towards him.

It was one of those curious mental encounters you get sometimes with a man you haven't spoken to. There was I heading straight for him and there was he standing watching me, with the green water slipping past him on either hand along the black topsides of his ship. If I altered course, I should be patently avoiding him. If I went on, I should have to go alongside and speak to him. I couldn't do anything else. I didn't want to do either.

He wore black to the neck, wrists and ankles, but all of him that showed was white. I don't mean merely that he was a white man in the racial sense. He was quite colourless, so that his eyes

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and even, as he tilted his head back, his nostrils showed dark, like cavities in a white-washed wall. For a man that spent his time at sea this didn't seem right. My far sight is not as good as it was, but I got the impression of a thin face and close-cropped hair. I suddenly saw a way out. I could alter course and pass wide of him, but wave without speaking as I went.

I don't know how far I was from him. He smiled, and I held on my course. The smile split the white surface like a running crack. It wasn't an attractive smile, but it established personal contact as effectively as if he had hailed me. There was nothing for it now but speech. His face was getting clearer every moment, but this did not seem to improve it. I slipped the clutch of the outboard and sidled up to him on the ebb.

He had a slightly prissified voice. He leaned over and said, "Do you want to buy a golden brick?" I got hold of his anchor cable, so that the tide swung my bows gently against his. When I looked up, I found that he was staring straight down at me. I got the feeling that he hadn't taken his eyes off my face since he came round the headland. He was still smiling. He was, as I had thought, entirely white.

I said, "I tell you what. I'll swap it for some oil-shares. Fabulous new gusher no one's heard of yet. Or I've a Maharani's pearl necklace I want to get rid of. We ought to be able to think up something."

He did not smile any more or any less. He said, "Hold on a minute," and disappeared inboard. There must have been a fore-hatch. He didn't go back along the deck. Then he re-appeared over the side and handed me down a parcel. It was smaller than a brick, of course, but of the same general proportions, wrapped in brown paper and strongly tied with what looked like whipping twine. He said, "Got it? It's heavy."

It was heavy—so heavy I almost let it go, but I lowered it safely to the floor-boards between my feet and looked up at him again. He was not smiling so much now, but did not seem able to leave off entirely. He said, "Sell it for what it will fetch and give me half, will you? Don't bother about a receipt."

"Why don't you sell it yourself?" I said. My one wish now was to cast off and lose sight of him, but I couldn't help asking the obvious question.

"Can't leave the ship, not just at present. But it's all right. I know I can trust you."

I did not find it possible to comment on this. I thought for a bit and said, "Where do you reckon I can sell a golden brick in Penharrow?"

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"Nowhere. But Clanbridge will be all right. Try Clanbridge tomorrow. I'll be in again about this time on Monday."

"Can I get you anything from the shops? A packet of sugar or a tin of beans?"

"No. No, thank you. I only want the money. I've got everything else I want."

I thought about this for a moment. "Yes," I said, "I believe I'm with you there. I've got everything else I want, probably, bar the money."

"Good. That's all right, then. See you on Monday." His head disappeared and I let go the cable, fending myself off from the black sides of the ketch. Once clear, I dropped in the clutch and motored away down the ebb. I remembered afterwards that I hadn't noticed the name.

The cove was deserted all right and the afternoon sun struck straight down through the green water. I cut the engine and drifted in until the bows took the dense sand. It shelved so steeply here that the stern was still in a foot or more of water. I took off my shoes, rolled up my cotton slacks (it still wasn't weather for shorts) and stood up. Then I remembered the parcel and stooped to pick it up off the floor-boards. Once again the weight took me by surprise and put me off balance. The boat, pivoted on her bow, rocked violently and I let everything go and sat down heavily on the centre thwart.

The parcel fell clear of the stern and went to the bottom in one motion. That's really the best way I can describe it. Normally if you drop a parcel into water it hits the surface with a splash and either floats a moment until it settles, or at least checks and drifts down in slow time, especially in dense Atlantic water. This went straight to the sand, wrappings and all, as if the water wasn't there. It sat on the bottom looking up at me, with the odd bubble drifting slowly up out of the folds in the paper.

I fished it out and carried it up the tiny beach. Then I sat down and picked at the seaman's knots in the soaked twine. I can never cut string if it is at all capable of being untied. The soggy paper rubbed off under my fingers and something gleamed through it. Then the knots gave and I unwrapped the thing. One doesn't handle gold much nowadays, more's the pity. Its loveliness has made it an economists' symbol and driven it underground into the vaults of the international monetary system. So I couldn't tell, and of course my whole mind was hell-bent on an alternative explanation. But the thing looked golden. It felt stone-cold and unbelievably dense.

It was nothing like brick-size by modern standards, though it

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might have made one of those small Roman bricks that the early English dug in quantity out of the ruins of Verulamium and built into the rose-red tower of St. Albans Abbey. It wasn't smooth by any means. The surface had a pronounced grain, as though it was wood. I seized on this almost in desperation. (My incredulity was fighting a last ditch rearguard action, and I didn't like it.) I thought it might be a wood-block, weighted and in some way or other given a gold skin. I had my swim, half anaesthetised by my mental preoccupation against the alarming cold of that placid sun-shot water. When I turned Penharrow Point, the ketch was nowhere to be seen.

I put the parcel in my bottom drawer and did not tell my wife about it. It wasn't a blonde I had collected in Penharrow Bay, and I could not bear to share my mental agitation with anyone. Later I got a loose hacksaw blade that I knew was in the boot of the car, retired to guaranteed privacy and sawed off a corner of the block. The steel went straight in and made almost no sound at all. It was golden right through the cut, but the grain was still there. I collected the dust on a piece of paper, screwed it into a ball and with magnificent nonchalance washed it down the water-closet.

Clanbridge is quite a town by West Country standards. I took out the tiny yellow pyramid I had cut off the corner of the block and put it on the glass counter of a respectable jeweller's, above the engagement rings and the more expensive Swiss watches. I said, "Can you tell me what this is—I mean, what the metal is?" The dark, earnest young man had almost London clothes but a soft local voice. He screwed a glass in his eye and said, "It looks like gold. Did you think it was gold, then?"

"I wanted to make sure."

He called an older but equally earnest man out of the back of the shop. "Mr. Tremayne," he said, "the gentleman wants to know, is this gold?"

Mr. Tremayne gave me a penetrating once-over and took the pyramid back into some sort of workshop. He came back carrying it flat on the palm of his hand and looking at me with more reservations than ever.

" 'Tis gold," he said. "Very pure gold indeed. Not jeweller's gold, you understand? Too soft, for one thing. And too expensive." He pushed the pyramid back at me and waited for my explanation.

I said, "What's it worth?" He told me its weight and current value. By our middle-class standards we could have lived on that pyramid for quite some time. He said, "There's salt on it. It's been in the sea, I reckon."

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I nodded. I could see which way his mind was running. Cornwall has collected more wrecks in its time than almost any bit of coast in the world, and the treasure-ship and the Spanish galleon are always in the back of the Cornish mind, even now. I wondered whether this was in fact the explanation. The white man could have found something and be playing it cautiously, but it left a lot of questions unanswered.

I thanked Mr. Tremayne politely and went out without an explanation. It was cruel to leave him like that, but I had no alternative, being if anything in a worse case than he was. I wondered whether he would tell anybody, but it did not seem to matter either way.

I did a rough calculation on the weight and value of the whole brick and looked till I found a jeweller in Tregantle Street much smaller and less respectable than Mr. Tremayne. The man was just right. He came out of his back room sideways and sidled along the counter looking at me across the bridge of his nose with his further eye. I lowered the brick carefully on to the counter, overstated its weight and asked him his price. He did not say anything except to challenge me on the weight. We weighed it on ordinary kitchen scales, and he breathed heavily through his nose the whole time. I agreed the weight, told him his first price was nonsense and accepted an offer equal to about two-thirds of the proper value. He didn't even have to go to the bank for the money. He had it all, dirty but current. I stuffed it into my coat pocket and left him breathing heavier than ever. He must have been the only person who gained anything out of the entire transaction.

On the Monday afternoon the tide was three hours higher, but I saw the black ketch anchored well out in the deep water beyond Penharrow Point. There was still no sea at all, but just enough breeze to sail the dinghy on. The sun was brilliant and almost hot. I reckon myself a competent inshore helmsman, though no navigator. The ebb sets strongly westward beyond the Point, and the airs were light. It took me half-an-hour's maneuvering, but I laid the dinghy neatly alongside the weather side of the ketch with no noise at all and no more of a bump than would wake the baby, if there happened to be one on board, which I did not think likely.

There wasn't in fact a sign of any life on board at all. The silence was complete except for the popple slapping very quietly under the counter. I was going to hail her, but it stuck in my throat. And I had no name to hail her by. She had no name on her

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anywhere, I ran the mainsail down and left the foresail to flap gently on loose sheets. I made fast to the ketch's mainstays, giving the dinghy a lot of painter, and pushed her off as I climbed on board. She drifted clear and sat there at the end of her painter. I didn't like to see the space of clear water between us. The black ship gave me the willies. It was all clean, fast and seamanlike, but there was no one about and something didn't smell right. The hatches were shut.

I was barefoot, but found myself on tiptoe as I made for the cockpit. It was only when I got there that I heard the noises, I suppose through the shut main hatch, though they sounded distant and shut away up forward. There was a droning sound, high-pitched and more or less continuous. I thought on the whole it was a human voice, but I wouldn't have sworn to human speech. I noticed with odd detachment that the hair was standing straight up at the back of my neck. I had read of this but never really visualised it. I felt extraordinarily sick. At intervals, overlying the drone like the chanter notes of a bagpipe, I recognized the high, precise voice of the white man, though I could not catch the words and it did not sound like English.

I took the currency notes out of my pocket and put them on the cockpit coaming, wedged under the neat coil of the starboard foresheet. I did not want any of them. I climbed out on deck and started to go forward. The forehatch opened suddenly, and the most appalling smell I have ever smelt drifted aft to me along the scrubbed, sun-bleached deck. I have been years in India and went through the war as an infantryman, but I could never have imagined anything like it. Apart from my physical nausea, my mind recoiled from it instinctively, as if from the ultimate evil.

The main hatch slammed open behind me, and I heard the white man in his prissy voice cursing in the cockpit. Then a head and shoulders came up out of the forehatch that should have come from nowhere but a grave, and shouldn't by rights have come out of that. It was, I suppose, a man. There were whisps of hair on the lower part of the face. It was entirely shrivelled. Apart from the cranium and frontal lobes, even the bone had collapsed, like a football bladder that has leaked slowly and crumpled in irregular patches.

The white man pushed me aside, so that I fell across the main boom, and ran forward with a long iron pin in his hand. He brandished it over the figure in the hatch. "*Redde baculum,*" he shouted. "*Redde baculum.*" He held out his left hand, demanding something. The eyes that

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looked up at him were dark, bright and perfectly simian. There was a muffle of clothes, patterned with coloured diagrams and smelling of the ultimate corruption, and behind them a hand like a lizard's hand clutched something white, like a conductor's baton.

The white man lifted the pin, and I caught his arm from behind and pulled him over backwards. We fell together on the deck, and I heard the hatch shut and found the air suddenly fit to breathe again. He wrenched himself away and jumped to his feet. He stood over the closed hatch, breathing like a man who has run for his life, and has not run far enough, but cannot run any more. There was sweat beaded all over his waxy face, and a plume of spittle at one corner of his white mouth. He found his voice, but it was weak and high-pitched.

"Damn you," he said, "damn you. Why did you want to interfere?"

I said, "You'd have brained him with that thing."

He shook his head. "You don't understand." I thought he was going to cry. "He's mine, don't you see?"

"He looks as if you'd had him too long," I said.

He said, quite simply, "We've had him four hundred years." We faced each other, the white man and I, across this preposterous statement, standing on the scrubbed deck with the sun striking down on us and the black ship rocking very gently to the popple that whispered under her counter. That was the only noise, that and his uneven breathing.

My reason rebelled as the horror died out of the sunlight. I said, "You haven't had anything four hundred years."

"My family," he said. "They brought him back from the Levant. They found what he could do. Everyone was trying then, but he could do it. We've had him ever since. But he's not to be trusted. You can see that. And he won't do the work. I've got to force him. He's getting old."

I thought of the collapsed skull and ape eyes. I said, "He is old. Can't you let him die in peace?"

"Die?" He almost screamed. He seemed exasperated. "Why should he die after we've kept him all these years?"

"Kept him prisoner," I said, "or why the ship?"

"The water," he said. "The water, don't you see? He's safe there. We can't keep him on shore."

I stood facing the white man in the Cornish sunlight, ready, quite seriously, to argue labour relations on behalf of an alchemist who, four hundred years before, had found the secret while the rest were inventing porcelain or gun-powder or Glauber Salts by mistake, and whose greatest of

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fence now was to be alive at all. It did not seem wholly unreasonable.

The glare seemed to change and strike upwards from between us. I saw it was the sun reflecting back from the hatch-top, which gleamed suddenly golden and burned like a mirror. The white man saw it at the same moment and caught his breath noisily. Then he ran aft and jumped down into the cockpit, the iron pin still in his hand. For a moment there was silence, and then a horrible babel broke out in the focsle below me, bumping noises, and that animal drone again, and the white man cursing steadily in his high precise voice and a language I did not recognise. Then he screamed, a long wavering scream of pure terror, cut off in the middle as suddenly as if a spring valve had shut on the sound.

The silence came back and I was certain that the forehatch would open again and bring up that horror from below deck. I ran to the side and began tearing at the dinghy's painter. The knot, unpardonably, had pulled tight, and I broke a finger-nail. I knelt working at it. I think I sobbed at intervals. It was then I realised that the ship had stopped its gentle rocking and was settling down in the water. I looked at the paint below me, and as I looked the level green water slipped half-an-inch higher.

The knot came away suddenly, and I pulled the dinghy in, kneeling where I was. I almost fell into her and pushed off violently from the topsides that now stood no more than six inches above me. I put an oar in the sculling notch and sculled desperately for perhaps twenty yards. Then I stopped and looked round.

The ketch was going down vertically, in one smooth, unwavering movement, as though some monstrous force had her by the keel and was dragging her steadily under. The sun struck at her along the water, and she gleamed all over. When the water was level with the deck, the forehatch opened and something dry rustled out and crouched there.

I remember once when I was a boy I threw a piece of rotten brick into a stream. It was porous and full of air, sucking in the water and settling slowly. As it went under, a spider emerged from a crevice in its top and sat rocking on the moving water, too light to break the tension that skinned its surface. Then it turned, looked about it and scuttled across the water to the bank.

The water, as I have said, is deep out beyond Penharrow Point, and the ketch's shining maintruck vanished without a sound into green swirling water which had already stopped bubbling. Nothing was left but a reddish-brown bundle which floated twirling on

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the surface of the sea. For half a minute I watched, waiting for it to sink. Then it gathered itself and crawled away, scrabbling with brown claws at the surface of a sea too cleanly to take it in.

I do not think I shall go to Penharrow again this summer. I shall find means to persuade the family that it is time we tried somewhere else. I should not care to sail or swim in those waters now, nor, when we go to Clanbridge, do I want to meet Mr. Tremayne or the sideways jeweller of Tregantle Street. I should be interested to know whether there are fresh rumours current of a treasure ship somewhere under the cliffs around Penharrow Bay. If anyone is sufficiently interested to start a search, I could show him a place off Penharrow Point which might be worth investigating, but the water is very deep there and the tides are strong. It is no job for the aqualung enthusiast, but a professional diver, properly equipped, might find, unless I am very much mistaken, a twenty-ton ketch in solid gold and somewhere aboard her a complete golden man with a long gold pin in his hand and his mouth open. So far as I am concerned, he can have the lot. Gold or no gold, I want nothing to do with them.

Zap!

Little Willie, fun of fun,
Borrowed Daddy's proton gun;
He tried it out with great elation—
Now he's cosmic radiation.

La Difference

(*With Apologies to H. H. Holmes*)

Though the sex of the asteroid vermin
Is exceedingly hard to determine,
You can tell boys from girls
By the shape of the curls
That a time-warp in space puts their perm in.

—**Randall Garrett**

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Reading the work of L. Sprague de Camp creates, irresistably, a certain picture of the author. He is tall, to begin with, well-built, handsome, with a trim beard, a fascinating store of anecdote and a command of many languages, including the Swahili (Up-Country dialect). The damnable and deceptive thing about such an imagined description is that it is all true—every single word of it, and more of the same! And what a fascinating life this fascinating man has led, too! Graduate engineer, MS in economics, Naval officer, world traveller, full-time writer (everything from science fact to verse), expert in the history of technology, collaborator with the late Fletcher Pratt and the quick Willy Ley and P. Schuyler Miller, continuer of Robert E. Howard's Conan *tales, contributor to the Voice of America and (at one time or another) 56 different magazines and newspapers, ex-lumberjack, -surveyor, -uranium prospector, author of 32 published books (four of them chosen for various honors), researcher in linguistics and history and phonetics, connoisseur of food/ drink/ music/ conversation,—space, indeed, and space alone, precludes continuing the list. In recent years Mr. de Camp has given special attention to the Hellenistic period, and the three novels so far resultant leave us regretting only that it leaves him so little time for magazine fiction. But when someone so versatile as the versatile Mr. de C. is concerned, very little is improbable—and nothing—save boredom itself—is impossible.*

DRAGON HUNT

by L. Sprague de Camp

I WAS TALKING WITH THE COLonel when he asked me what I had been doing lately. I told him: writing historical novels, juvenile picture books, and other pieces. Egged on, I went into detail about

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the novel that had just been published: *The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate.*

So, said he, twinkling at me over that Rasputinian beard, won't you write a piece for the magazine, telling the readers what you have just told me?

Aw, shucks, said I modestly, wouldn't that be committing narcissism in public? Unprofessional, maybe?

Not at all, said he. You write it, we'll publish it.

So here is the story of how *The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate* came to be.

A few years ago I started a series of historical novels, based on a definite plan. My purpose was to find a niche for these stories not already preëmpted by any of the existing successful historical-fiction writers, such as Mary Renault, Alfred Duggan, or Thomas Costain.

I therefore picked the setting that I know best from long reading, namely the classical and especially the Hellenistic age in the Mediterranean. Moreover, the particular aspect of history that I am most familiar with is the history of science and technology. Therefore I determined to make the stories turn in one way or another upon some event, real or fictitious, in the growth of scientific or technical knowledge. In other words, these are science-fiction stories, but in a special sense, as a novel about Galileo or Darwin would be.

There have of course been a multitude of classical historical novels, ever since Wallace and Sienkiewicz launched their *Ben-Hur* and *Quo Vadis?* A large majority, however, deal either with the downfall of the Roman Republic or the rise of Christianity. These are certainly legitimate subjects for novels, but those particular corners of the field are, let us say, a bit crowded.

Many other characters and events in classical history invite fictional treatment but have never been thus exploited by my colleagues. To learn about them, however, you have to dig through the original sources: Herodotos, Diodoros, and the rest.

Well, that was the plan. *An Elephant for Aristotle,* which appeared in 1958, is based upon the speculation of Col. Pierre Armandi in 1843 that Alexander the Great sent an elephant from India to his old tutor Aristotle in Athens. If this happened—which there is reason to suspect—somebody had to get that elephant over 3,000 miles of deserts, mountains, and stormy seas, as well as find a couple of hundred pounds of hay and vegetables every day to fill the monster's maw. That was the story.

The next was *The Bronze God of Rhodes* (1960, soon to be reprinted in paperback). This deals

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with the siege of Rhodes by Demetrios Poliorketes in -305, with the lively developments in siege engineering of the time, with the subsequent erection of the Colossus of Rhodes, and with the founding of the Library of Alexandria.

The third, *The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate* (Dec., 1961) arose from a combination of several historical facts and surmises. The first is the story of Sataspes, as told by Herodotos (IV, 43). Sataspes, a Persian nobleman in the reign of Xerxes, was condemned to be impaled for raping a girl of noble family. His mother, who was Xerxes' sister, got his sentence commuted to the circumnavigation of Africa. Sataspes got partway down the west coast of Africa but was stopped by adverse winds and currents. Xerxes, however, did not believe his story (which may have been perfectly true) and had him impaled anyway.

The second source is the fact that, of the twenty-three groups of tribute bearers sculptured on each of the two retaining walls of the Apadana at Persepolis, the last group of each set shows three unmistakable African Pygmies. One carries a pot, one an elephant's tusk, while the third leads an okapi. Evidently, in the reign of Xerxes (-486 to -465) somebody traveled from the Achaemenid Empire to a country where Pygmies and okapis dwelt and returned to tell the tale. When one weighs the various probabilities, it seems likely that the traveler reached the headwaters of the Nile, in the Lake Region of east-central Africa.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the assertions of several Greek writers (Aischylos, Anaxagoras, Euripides, Aristotle, Poseidonios, Diodoros, Claudius Ptolemaeus, etc.) that the Nile originated in rain or melting snow on tall equatorial mountains, the "Silver Mountain" or the "Mountains of the Moon." As there was no *a priori* reason to expect snow in such a tropical clime, it is likely that these allusions were based upon an actual sight of the snow-capped Ruwenzori range.

Afterwards all details of this expedition were forgotten, so that we do not even know the name of the man or men who accomplished one of the greatest of all feats of exploration. The source of the White Nile remained an enigma until just about a century ago, when the country was opened up by Burton, Speke, Grant, Stanley, and Baker.

Another source for the novel was the argument over the *sirrush*. This is the dragon depicted in Babylonian art as the mascot of the great god Marduk, even as the lion was the pet of the goddess Ishtar and the bull that of the god Addad.

Koldewey, who dug up Babylon at the beginning of this century,

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suggested that perhaps the priests of Marduk, to awe their worshipers, kept a large lizard in a cage and passed it off as a baby sirrush. Although there does not now appear to be any species of monitor living in Babylonia, several related species are found in Iran, Israel, and Egypt. Therefore such an imposture is possible.

Finally, for the title, I felt I could hardly improve upon the one that Willy Ley used for a chapter of his book *The Lungfish, the Dodo, and the Unicorn,* telling about the controversy over the sirrush. When the sculpture became known, there was speculation to the effect that the imaginary beast was based upon some real reptile —perhaps a small dinosaur—that had survived down to Achaemenid times somewhere in Africa. However, nothing has happened since to confirm this hypothesis. Be that as it may, with Willy's kind permission I lifted the chapter title.

The plot of the novel is as follows: Xerxes, king of kings of the Persian Empire, is feeling his years. His tame wizard, Ostanas, tells him that he has discovered an elixir of life, whose ingredients include the ear of a king, the blood of a dragon, and the heart of a hero. Naturally, these items are not readily come by. But Ostanas persuades his king that, if they can find a man who can fetch the first two items, the third one will take care of itself.

At this time an officer in the Imperial Guard, Bessas of Zariaspa, has been unjustly sentenced to death by impalement for his unwitting involvement in the scandal of Sataspes. Bessas is a gigantic young Bactrian who can outride, outfight, and outdrink everybody, although in some other respects he is not altogether clever. Xerxes pardons Bessas on condition that he obtain a live sirrush, rumored to lurk at the headwaters of the Nile, and the ear of a king. To insure his compliance, Xerxes holds Bessas' mother as hostage for his return.

Bessas sets out with his former tutor, a middle-aged Greek schoolmaster named Myron of Miletos. They survive ambush in Babylon, become involved in the plot of a pretender to the throne in Palestine, engage the services of a gang of tomb robbers in Egypt, and attend a barbaric orgy in Kush. They obtain their king's ear (read the story to find out how) and, after overcoming great hardships, reach the headwaters of the Nile.

However, since the story is not one more rehash of Conan Doyle's lost-world theme, and since the unknown real explorers did bring back, not a sirrush, but an okapi, the fictional heroes do not find any sirrush. Instead, a Pygmy chieftain whom they have rescued from cannibals furnishes them with a live okapi. Hoping that this animal will placate Xerxes, they start

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for home, Bessas still in ignorance of the fact that his heart is to furnish the final ingredient of the potion . . .

The next step was to go over as much of the ground as I could to see it for myself. Although I have a fair collection of books dealing with the parts of the world in which my story is laid and have read many more, there is nothing like seeing the country with your own eyes. If I could not manage to make the whole journey from Persepolis to the Ruwenzori, as did my characters, I could cover the African and Syrio-Lebanese sections.

So, at dawn on a fine March morning, a BOAC airliner set me down at Entebbe, the airport for Kampala, capital of Uganda. For two days I was driven about Kampala by Juma Kitalisa, an intelligent and pious Muslim Mganda.* At noon he asked me to locate the direction of Mecca with my pocket compass so that he could pray in the right direction.

Juma showed me the sights, including an excellent small museum. Here, I learned that the landscape of Uganda in the early Pleistocene was enlivened by such creatures as a warthog the size of a rhinoceros and a sheep the size of an elephant. Alas! Beautiful Ripon Falls, where the White Nile flows out of Victoria Nyanza, has been turned into a hydroelectric installation. Uganda, being on the equator but fairly high up, has the most delightful climate in the world.

Juma also showed me the tomb of Mtesa I, who reigned in gory splendor a century ago when Speke and Grant discovered him. The tomb is an oversized thatched hut with red-painted woodwork. Pious Muslim or no, Juma prayed to the spirit of Mtesa, on whom King Ravonga in my story is based. The fictional incident of King Ravonga's new sword is based upon one that happened on the visit of Speke and Grant. When the explorers gave Mtesa a gun, the king handed it to a page and told the lad to take it out and kill somebody with it to see if it worked. And so it was done. Later Mtesa went on a hunt with his gun and, finding no game, shot a number of his subjects instead.

Juma also showed me the pool in which Mtesa had persons who displeased him fed to the royal crocodiles. I have sometimes wished for such a pond. However, I thought that my King Ravonga, living over 2,000 years earlier, would not have anything so sophisticated as a special crocodile pond; so he merely had people tied up and thrown into a crocodile-infested river.

At Juma's suggestion, we went

** Bantu words are modified by prefixes instead of suffixes. Hence one Mganda, two Baganda, who live in Uganda and speak Luganda.*

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to a boxing tournament between the King's East African Rifles and the Kampala Boxing Club. Juma sensibly said (I can only faintly suggest the Luganda-English dialect): "We buy ten-silling seats. Ze Blitiss sink zey have to buy fifteen-silling seats, but we can see zust as well fom ten-silling seats."

All of Kampala showed up in the open-air stadium on the edge of town:—British colonials in dinner jackets, Sikhs in white shorts and turbans, and several thousand Baganda. It was orderly despite occasional war-whoops and cries of "Freedom!" This comes out in Luganda as "fi-*do*," with a long nasal vowel on the end.

The King's East African Rifles were British lads; the Kampala Boxing Club, all Baganda except for the heavyweight, who was an Italian. The Baganda, albeit one of the many Bantu-speaking groups, are a rather small, slight people, and they just didn't have anybody big enough to fight in the heavyweight class.

It was a massacre. The British fought like plucky amateurs, the Africans like pros. While I was there, the British won only two events out of about a dozen, one on a foul and the other on a decision that I thought was wrong.

Afterwards the reigning Kabaka, Mtesa II (formerly called the Honourable Freddy) handed out silver cups to all, win, lose, or draw. Mtesa II was a stocky young Mganda in a white dinner jacket. The British fighters marched up to him and halted with the loud British infantry stamp. The Ganda boys did as their forefathers had done a hundred years ago on meeting the first Mtesa; they threw themselves down prone, crying: *"Nyanzigé!"* It was just an act, enjoyed by all. Freddy Mtesa, a shrewd young man, has never fed anybody to a crocodile in his life.

Then I went on safari. If anybody thinks that nowadays "safari" means a train of naked blacks marching in single file through the elephant grass with things on their heads, I must disillusion him. My safari consisted of four Chevrolets with Ganda drivers and fourteen tourists, mostly American with a sprinkling of Britons and other nationalities. One Australian had a French wife who wore high heels and carried a parasol all through the Ituri Forest.

We drove to the Queen Elizabeth National Park, bordering on the Congo. As you know, nowadays most of Africa is no wilder than Ohio. The great herds of game have practically vanished outside the parks and preserves, and it is anybody's guess whether the new African governments will maintain these preserves or, in return for a little temporary political support, turn the tribesmen

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loose with their rifles, wire snares, and poisoned arrows.

However, I saw two of the parks while they were still in good shape, with elephant all over the place and plenty of buffalo, hippopotamus, antelope of various species, smaller fry like warthog and hyena, and swarms of exotic birds. So some of my descriptions of African animal life, such as the buffalo's habit of staring fixedly at distant human beings, are based on personal observation.

We heard lions roaring at night but did not see them. There were no rhinoceros in this park; hence the account in the story of repelling a rhino by clattering sticks together (pp. 278f) is based upon a method used, I was told, by the African drivers in other parks where rhino do roam. Nor, I'm sorry to say, did I see any sign of a sirrush.

The morning after we arrived, we set out before breakfast for animal-watching. Soon we came upon a hippo, grazing sixty yards away. The hippo does not normally eat water plants. At night he comes out to graze, and in the day he goes back into the water to digest the grass he has eaten. (See pp. 357f of the novel.) The rules say not to approach elephant, hippopotamus, or buffalo on foot closer than 100 yards. But we had not yet read the rules, and the Bagasda encouraged us to do as we liked.

I had three companions: George Heffernon, a retired U. S. Army surgeon; his wife; and an older lady whom I shall call Mrs. June Branch. George and I got out to stalk the hippo with cameras. When we had halved the distance, the hippo looked up with a scowl; at least, I got the impression that if he could have scowled he would have.

We halted and began shooting. Presently the beast looked up again. I backed towards the car, but George kept clicking away. The hippo champed his jaws, gave a thunderous snort, and started bounding towards us at appalling speed like an animated blimp. George and I ran faster than either of us had done in thirty years, with cameras, binoculars, and light meters fluttering behind us. We jumped into the car and slammed the doors; the hippo went back to his grass as if nothing had happened.

For the rest of the trip, the two women kidded us, urging us to do it again so they could have their cameras ready. We said: to hell with that; this time you tease the hippopotamus and we'll take the pictures.

When we reached the borders of the then Belgian Congo, a complication arose. Mrs. Branch, although a charming lady, was one of the most disorganized persons I ever met. She was always dropping her costly cameras, losing

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things, holding up the rest of us by asking the drivers to run special errands for her, and shrieking:

"Oh, Juma! Stop! Stop! I want to take a picture of that pretty waterfall!" She was perpetually driving her travel agents crazy by changing her plans.

When we reached the Congo, Mrs. Branch had no visa, which Americans had to have. There had been a misunderstanding in Kampala. So, what to do? In the customs office were one Belgian and two Congolese. After much palaver, one of the latter approached me, saying shyly:

"Avec votre permission, monsieur, nous pouvons mettre Madame Branche sur votre forme de douane, comme si elle vous accompagnait!"

Luckily, Mrs. Branch did not speak French. I said: *"Eh bien, elle est un peu vieille pour maîtresse en titre; mais il faut être agréable donc!"*

So a rubber stamp was impressed upon my brown customs declaration form, and the stamp was filled in to the effect that I was "accompanied" by Mme. June Branch. No doubt somebody will dig this form out of the files half a century hence (if the termites don't get to it first) and say: hey, what was this guy up to while his wife's back was turned? The Belgian added a caution that we must be sure to leave the Congo together. Otherwise the officer at the point of exit would want to know if I had quarreled with my *petite amie* and had fed her to a crocodile, or what.

Although this was only a month before the ill-starred Congolese independence, everything was still quiet in the Congo. The Belgians, however, were nervous and with good reason. They had run a very tightly exploitative régime, requiring all Congolese to salute all whites in passing and things of that sort. If—as I believe some of them claim—they began to change these policies in the years just before independence, the change was too late to do any good. An intelligent Portuguese innkeeper told me that he had no fears about getting along with the Congolese; the Belgians were the ones who had given him all the trouble. Despite his having been in Africa for thirty years, they still deemed him *á sale étranger.*

In the Ituri Forest we watched a villagefull of Pygmies do a rude shuffling dance, as they do on page 380 of the story. Their dance, if you can call it that, is not at all like the dancing of the Batutsi and Bahutu, who are real artists.

Subsequently we passed the picturesque Rutshuru Falls and stopped to take pictures. Seeing one of those dangling jungle vines of the kind that Tarzan swings on, we tried swinging on it, too;

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but it didn't work. In the first place, not having been nailed fast by the property man, the vine kept tearing loose from the bough to which it clung. In the second, I shook down on myself a swarm of venomous ants, which crawled inside my clothes to bite. Somehow ants never seem to bother Tarzan.

The nicest thing about the Congo was the escape from the food in the British-run hotels and lodges. The food in such establishments in East Africa and the Sudan may be described as tropical British—an incompetent native imitation of British cooking, which is the world's worst to begin with. The Belgians' food was marvelous. I am told that native Sudanese food is excellent, too, but I didn't have a chance to eat any.

My Central African tour did not actually cross the path of my characters. I got only as far north as Lake George, while my heroes, for reasons of plot, only penetrated as far south as Lake Albert, about 100 miles from my northernmost point. For one thing, when I planned the trip I had only a vague, general idea of where my characters were going. For another, to forego organized tours altogether and insist upon traveling just where you wish in solitary splendor raises the cost of travel to the point where the whole project becomes impracticable.

Hence, for details of scenery around Lake George (called in the story by its older name of Lata Nzigé) I had to fall back on travel books. The African trip was nevertheless invaluable in giving first-hand impressions of the scenery, weather, wild life, vegetation, people, and housing of Uganda, whereof I made full use in Chapters XVI to XVIII.

The cannibal Akulangba of the story are based upon the Azande or Niam-Niam, a miscellaneous group of tribes along the westerly Sudanese-Congolese border region who, before they were brought under control half a century ago, did practise cannibalism. As I did not get to the Azande country—Africa is a hell of a big place—I had to depend on anthropological reports for my knowledge of them.

I wanted to cover as much of the trip from Uganda north to Cairo as I could on the surface, as one sees little from an airplane that could be useful to a novelist. Had I known then what I know now about the arrangements one has to make, I could have done the southern Sudan by Nile steamer; but I didn't and so had to fly it. Therefore I had to get my information about this region and its people from the books of the Victorian explorers like Speke, Grant, and Baker; of modern nat-

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uralists and anthropologists; and of popularizers like Moorehead. The customs I attributed to the Nilotics (King Gau and his folk) are those their descendants observed in modern times, and there is good reason to think that these people had the same habits 2,500 years ago as in the past century.

The southern Sudan is the land of the *sadd*, the great swamps of the White Nile. It is inhabited by the tall, naked, Nilotic Negroes such as the Dinka and Shilluk. The northern Sudanese, who rule the country, are Egyptianized Muslims and therefore even more puritanical about nudity than Christians. They do not like foreigners' poking about among the Nilotics and taking pictures of naked tribesmen, which pictures, they think, reflect adversely on the country's culture and degree of civilization. But it can be done if you start well in advance and work through the right channels.

Be that as it may, I arrived by air in Khartoum for a stay of three days. I wanted to visit the pyramids of Meroê, the capital of ancient Kush—not Conan's but the real one. The Kushites once conquered Egypt. Although driven out by the Assyrians, they took over from the Egyptians the custom of burying royalty in pyramids. In fact, they continued this usage for many centuries after the Egyptians themselves had given it up.

It took two days of searching, with some much-appreciated help from the U. S. Embassy, to find a garage owner with a jeep for rent. So, on the morning of the last day, I set out at six down the Nile in the jeep with a young Khartoumi, Tejani, driving. Hence my description (pp. 274ff) of the Nile between Meroê and Soba is first-hand. Meroê is assumed—correctly, I think—to have looked much like a modern Sudanese town, such as Shendi, without gas stations and other modern appurtenances, and with a city wall.

I tried also to visit the ruins of Soba, a town a couple of miles up the Blue Nile from Khartoum. But the taxi driver who said he could take me there went up the wrong side of the Blue Nile, and by the time I realized this it was too late. However, I did find some lines of crumbling mud-brick on the south bank of the Blue Nile opposite Soba, indicating another former town, which the archeologists apparently do not know about. I passed the word on to Jean Vercoutter of the Sudanese Antiquities Service and hope that he or one of his successors will some day get around to excavating it. Now, of course, all their resources are concentrated on the sites in Nubia to be flooded by the raising of the Aswân Dam.

Some readers and reviewers commented in a shocked sort of

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way on the description of the raw-meat feast in Chapter XII, in the Kushite part of my story. Although this novel does not bear down heavily on sex (even though Boy Gets Girls—two of them at once) some found the Kushite orgy too strong for their stomachs. However, this revel was not the product of the lurid imagination which some reviewers—the flatterers!—attributed to me. It was based on the banquets witnessed by James Bruce in Abyssinia in the 1760s, and on Wallis Budge's arguments to show that the same customs were observed in ancient Kush.

My General Puerma, by the way, was based upon a Sudanese official who was a close friend of some of my State Department acquaintances. King Saas-herqa in the story was a real king. King Takarta is imaginary, but his predecessor Karkamon and his successor Astabarqamon were real.

The journey to Meroê was a fifteen-hour round trip, and you need a four-wheel drive because of the many stretches of soft sand. Seeing dead camels lying by the roadside with vultures tearing picturesquely at them, I thought that what I needed to add to the junk in my study was a well-bleached Sudanese camel's skull. So I tried to tell Tejani what I wanted. Not knowing the Arabic for "skull," I said I wanted the *head* of a camel. Oh, said Tejani, that would be easy. We'd stop at Shendi, where I could buy a camel, cut off its head, and take it with me. My wife is glad that I did not follow up this suggestion.

We had troubles. The starter gave out, so we had to re-start the jeep by pushing. Try pushing a jeep through soft sand.

We got to Meroê about two, in blistering heat. Tejani became bothersome, asking for money. This is a common form of extortion in desert countries. The theory is that the tourist will be so terrified of being abandoned in the waste that he will fork over without protest.

Having been through this before in Egypt, I merely said: *"Ba'den, ba'den* [later]." Tejani subsided. Most Sudanîn are not like that, being a warrior race with the virtues and faults of such. The Sudan is the only Muslim land where I have had tips refused, not once but several times. Hence the allusions in the story to the relative honesty of the Kushites.

On the way home, we were still nowhere near Khartoum a couple of hours after sunset. We had given lifts to several stranded passengers of broken-down trucks. The Sudanîn buy trucks on tick and run them without proper maintenance. So now and again we passed one of these trucks with the trucker lying under it and

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fiddling with wrenches, and a dozen ghostly-looking villagers in turbans and jallabiyyas waiting for what God should provide. You run much less risk in giving such a man a lift than you do in picking up a hitchhiker in this country.

Now it was dark, with a zodiacal light of extraordinary brightness, almost like one of the better auroras of the northern United States (cf. p. 177 of the story). Tejani swerved to avoid an ass, which had wandered into the road, and lost himself in a grassy field. He came to a pair of ruts and, tired and confused, started to turn the wrong way, back towards Meroê. I said in Arabic:

"The road's to the left."

Tejani made the turn, found the road, and then lost his temper. He burst into a stream of abusive Arabic, flapping his hand in front of my face. Although he spoke too fast for me to follow him, from the occasional word I caught I inferred that he was telling me to mind my own damned business; that he was the driver and I knew no more about the roads than a blind man. So relations between us were cool thereafter.

After all my exertions, I did not find it possible to work the pyramids of Meroê into the story, because at the time of the tale the Kushites had not yet begun to build pyramids at Meroê. All their kings had been buried near Napata. And, as the story worked out, there was no good excuse to stage a scene at Napata. But of course I am not in the slightest sorry that I went, for I learned much more about the Sudan than I should ever have done in Khartoum or riding about in trains, ships, and airplanes.

At nine, festooned with cameras and other optical equipment and covered by an inch-thick layer of Sudanese dust (referred to on p. 238) I staggered into the bar at the Hotel Grand. As I sank down on a bar stool and demanded a triple scotch, the man on the next stool turned and said:

"Ernest Hemingway, eh?"

I went from Khartoum to Luxor by surface transportation, to see what I could of the country. In Luxor I was to meet my wife, who had not gone with me to central Africa because she thought she might prove allergic to elephants without bars in front of them. The journey comprised a 24-hour trip on the narrow-gage Sudanese railways to Wadi Halfa; a journey of a day, a night, and half a day by Nile steamer to Shellal; and finally several hours on the Egyptian state railway. The region around Shellal is described on pp. 222ff; ancient Egyptian Swenet is the Syênê of the Greeks and modern Aswân, while Yeb is

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Greek Elephantinê and modern Gazîret Aswân, "Aswân Island."

The Sudanese train was late, so we could not stop the steamer at the temple of Rameses II at Abu Simbel—the one to be jacked up to keep it out of water when the Aswân Dam is enlarged for the third time. I shared a cabin with an Egyptian agricultural expert with the most horrible snore I have ever heard.

On the train from Shellal to Luxor (for scenery, see p. 220 of the book) one of my compartment companions was a little fat man in tweeds and beret, who turned out to be the tax collector at Aswân. He complained that nobody loves the tax gatherer, although he is an important and necessary official. Furthermore, everybody wants a free handout from the government, but nobody wants to pay his share when the tax collector comes around. It sounded familiar.

Meanwhile my wife was awaiting me in the lobby of the hotel in Luxor, getting more and more nervous as I failed to show up on time. At last, towards midnight, as she described it:

"I looked up and saw three ragamuffins come up to the desk; and I thought, what a shame that this nice hotel should let such filthy people in. Then I thought, my God, one of them is mine!"

My three-day sojourn in Luxor provided the scenery for pp. 196-219 of the novel, especially Hatshepsut's temple and the colossi of Amenhotep III. I did not, however, visit King Siptah's tomb, but got my information from an archeological report.

In addition to the standard excursions (the Temple of Amon at Karnak, where the high priest Jed-hor entertained my heroes; Tutankhamon's tomb, etc.) I spent a day visiting monuments off the tourist track: the temple of Seti I at Qurna, the Ramesseum, and the temple of Medîna Habu. I told the agency not to send a guide, because I knew more about the things I was to see than most guides. Most guides have a few well-rehearsed speeches, which they utter like recording devices, and get hopelessly confused if the tourist deviates from the regular routine.

I picked up my driver on the west bank. He had a little European phaëton of the vintage of 1930, beautifully kept up. At each place we stopped, Nasr disappeared into the nearest mud hut and came out with a *fallâh*, who tried to sell me tea and cookies. For various reasons I did not wish tea and cookies. I finally got gracefully out of the situation by saying: "*Ana ramadhâni* [I'm keeping Ramadan]." Then they were all smiles of admiration.

The Ramesseum harbors the broken stone colossus, a report of which inspired Shelley's *Ozyman-*

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dias. True, the scene does not look at all like Shelley's description:

> Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
> Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
> The lone and level sands stretch far away.

But that is no serious criticism of the poem, and Shelley had never been to Luxor.

I paid off Nasr, boarded one of the 40-foot launches that serve as ferries, and scrunched down in the fantail amid a swarm of local fallahîn, from kids to graybeards. Soon we were chattering away. They asked about my wives and children, and I showed them my wallet photographs of these. (One wife only, I hasten to add.) A young schoolteacher came aft to help out when I ran out of Arabic.

At last somebody asked if I were a Muslim or a Copt. Now, this was a tricky question. There are many Copts around Luxor, and there is a good deal of mutual hostility between the Copts and the Muslim majority in modern Egypt. ("Copt," from the Greek *Aigyptos* via the Arabic *Quft,* once meant any Egyptian, but now it means a member of the Coptic Christian Church, which is very close to the Greek Orthodox Church.)

I hesitated, racking my brains for a tactful reply. Then, just as we landed, Allâh sent me an inspiration. I said: "*Fi fikri kull iddîn kuwayyis* [In my opinion, all religion is good]." Broad smiles all around again.

We went from Luxor to Cairo by train, seeing more of the Nile valley, and met old friends in Cairo. I had visited Saqqâra, site of ancient Memphis, two years previously, and my notes on this visit, together with Flinders Petrie's archeological reports and the descriptions of Memphis by Herodotos and Diodoros, furnished the background for Chapter IX.

Then we flew to Beirut and spent a week traveling about Lebanon and Syria. Thence came the material for Chapters V and VI. I did not see all the places described in the story—the Tower of the Snail, for instance—but I still got a pretty good idea of the appearance of ancient Phoenicia. Fedden's *Syria* filled in many gaps.

Palestine I was not able to see, for lack of time and because of the diplomatic difficulties of combining a visit to Israel and one to the Arab states in one journey. So I had to rely on books, of which I found Howells' *A Naturalist in Palestine* most useful.

From Beirut we flew back to Italy, where we toured Sicily and tramped the ruins of Ostia. As this article is not an exercise in name-dropping, I will spare you accounts of how we dined with

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the Stygian Minister of Necromancy and were shown the ruins of Zamboula by Professor Thoth-Amon. I fear they would be tedious to you, however fascinating we found the events at the time. The only real disturbance in our plans was when we failed to get into Jordan because our guide's papers were out of order. But we put the time to good advantage by visiting Kerak des Chevaliers—the great Crusader castle in Syria—and the Phoenician ruins at Byblos (modern Jebayl).

All this time, besides working my Rolleiflex, I was also writing notes in shorthand about everything I saw that I had not already heard about: the big brown half-tame eagle-hawks of northeast Africa, the blue-eyed blonds of northwestern Syria, and so forth. (Cf. pp. 96, 320.) I also picked up as many local guidebooks as I could. They are invaluable in writing about far places and are almost impossible to obtain by remote control.

For serious travel of our sort, in which museums and ruins take precedence over beaches and night clubs, the best guides are still the old Baedeker guidebooks, published from 1910 to 1930. No contemporary publication that I have seen compares to the Baedekers on Egypt and the Sudan, Palestine and Syria, and Southern Italy and Sicily. You have to get them from a rare-book dealer at about $20.00 a book, but they are well worth it.

Back home, I turned my notes into typescript, outlined my novel, and went to work. In this story, I allowed some echoes of Robert E. Howard to creep in. I did this deliberately, because the Hyborian atmosphere seemed appropriate to the time and place of the story. The tale, however, is not a fantasy. Although the characters believe in many supernatural things, everything that happens also has a materialistic explanation.

The story also has its realistic aspects. Like the others, it turns upon events in the history of science: the discovery of the sources of the Nile, the discovery of the roundness of the earth, and the beginnings of a skeptical, rational attitude towards the supernatural with the rise of Ionian philosophy.

So that's that. I have a contract for another novel of this series. The working title is *The Arrows of Herakles,* and the story will be about Dionysios the Great of Syracuse, his wars with Carthage, and the invention of the catapult. I hope to get to work on it by the end of this year, using the photographs made, the notes written, and the guidebooks bought in Sicily. ◄

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A recent visit at our apartment from the spit-and-image of Poseidon—beard, mane, and earthquakes; lacking only the trident—reminded us once again of the persistence into our time of mythical archetypes. A few days later this story of Fritz Leiber's arrived, telling us that he had noticed the same phenomena: only in Norse, rather than Greek, terms: and that he finds the continuance (or emergence, or re-emergence) *of the archetypes infinitely disturbing, rather than merely interesting. The story shook us, we confess. The danger it speaks of is one which shakes us constantly, and seems unlikely to be avertable by offerings of bulls or stallions, or even striplings and virgins. We recalled an old book from our own childhood, with an illustration showing the evil-doing and lying-tongued Loki of the Norse myths. Bound for his sins, he lay prostrate in a cave (an air-raid shelter?) and over him the punishing serpent dripped venom. His daughter held a cup beneath the venomous flow (—or is the* daughter *the shelter?), but when it required to be emptied, moved she never so quickly, yet a drop of venom fell upon the sinner's face, and he writhed in agony. . . . Did he break his bonds? Was he pardoned? What damage was it that he wrought? And—in terms of type, archetype, and prototype—*who was Loki? *And can we bind him, can we dare* not *bind him?—this time, forever . . .*

MYTHS MY GREAT-GRAND-DAUGHTER TAUGHT ME

by Fritz Leiber

ONE AFTERNOON I WOKE IN THE patio feeling sun-toasted and relaxed, my mind very clear but with the glisten of dreams still on it. I ran my hand through my beard and decided to chop it off, which

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didn't make sense as it felt silky and looked a beautiful silver gray —when who should come around the corner of the house but my great-granddaughter with her chin tucked down against her chest and her big eyes boring into me as they always do when she's prepared to confound me.

One skinny arm hugged to her side a weatherbeaten gray book showing faintly on the cover a gold-stamped design of three curved horns interlocking. I knew that detail because I'd noticed the same warped-cover book lying around the house several times lately, but never bothered to check what it was, though I'd been meaning to.

She stopped in front of me and untucked her chin and pushed a strand of long pale hair back from her cheek and even yawned fakily, but I knew that was just to get me off guard.

Then she suddenly shot at me, "G'gramps" (she pronounces it guh-GRAMPS) "G'gramps," she shot at me, "why do the frost giants always talk Russian?"

"Well, I guess they have some pretty tall people in Russia," I temporized, "and they certainly have some pretty chilly winters, as Napoleon and Hitler discovered to their sorrow. Hey, how do you know these frost giants talk Russian?"

"Because they write B for V and P for R," she explained impatiently, "and for G they make a little gibbet."

"That's not talking, that's writing," I started to object, but she pursed her lips and bored her eyes into me again and asked suspiciously, "G'gramps, do you *know* Norse mythology?"

"You ought to say *dig*," I told her. "Why don't you talk cute beatnik like all the other brainy little eight-year-olds with authors for fathers, or fathers once or twice removed? Why, I've known writers to make vast fortunes just copying down what their cute teenage beatnik daughters say over the phone."

She cut me off with, "Oh, G'gramps, beatnik went out twenty years ago."

"I'm very glad to hear that," I said. "But now about this Norse jazz, it's all very wild and doomful and warlike, and they have nine worlds, I think, but I remember Jotunheim, where the frost giants live, and Asgard—that's where our boys live—"

"Oh, so you admit they're our boys?" she interrupted.

"Well, I mean they're the heroes, sort of. They're the Aesir—"

"How do you spell that? AEC?"

"No, AES," I told her, "though I suppose you could have C-cedilla."

"Or AE could stand for American Empire," she suggested.

"Look, I'm telling this," I told her. "There are these Aesir—Odin,

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Thor & Company—and they live in Asgard, boozing it up and being athletic. Leading off from Asgard is the bridge Bifrost (you say that Beef Roast and not By Frost) with Heimdall to guard it—"

"The launching orbit," she interrupted excitedly. "Bifrost is the launching orbit and Heimdall is the big radar station that guards against missiles from Jotunheim and the other countries."

"That's too science-fictiony," I objected, "though I do seem to remember that Heimdall could see for a hundred miles in every direction and even hear the grass grow —"

"Sonar too," she said. "Radar and hyper-sonar."

I chuckled in my throat at that, it was rather cute, though there was a little chill in the back of my neck, just behind the chuckle, because it has always seemed to me that there is something frighteningly for-our-times in this Norse notion of embattled worlds with magic weapons poised against each other and then just going ahead and destroying each other at Ragnarok.

"Go on," she prompted. "Tell me some more about Asgard. Tell me any story you remember."

"Well, it's been a long time," I objected, scratching my chin through my silky silver beard. "I forget what led up to it, but there was one about the dwarfs having a contest to see who could make the most wonderful gifts for the gods."

"They're the scientists," she said sharply, nodding her head. "The dwarfs are the scientists and the engineers."

"Have it your own way," I told her. "Well, these gifts for the Aesir —who were the gods, of course —"

"They would naturally think that," she agreed smoothly.

I blinked at her, but went on, "These gifts included the spear Gungnir, which would hit whatever mark it was thrown at no matter how bad the aim of the thrower—"

I thought I heard her say, "Self-correcting homing missile," but I went on, "And the boat Skidbladnir—you know, it's funny but I always read that as skin-bladder—anyhow, the boat Skidbladnir, which a person could fold up and fit in his pocket—"

"Pocket battleship," she said instantly. "It says just that."

"And the boar Gold Bristle that flew forever, shedding light—" I was determined to finish off my list.

"Atomic spaceship," she said. "Or maybe photonic."

"And Thor's hammer Mjolnir."

"Another missile, of course. Don't they actually have one called Thor?"

"And the gold ring Draupnir, that dropped eight rings like itself every ninth night—"

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"That could be atomic transmutation," she said thoughtfully, "or maybe just the capitalist economic system."

"Now look here," I said rather loudly, for I wanted to end this nonsense before it got any more nightmarish, "you use awfully big words and subtle concepts, even for a little girl who's outgrown beatnik."

"I'm your own great-granddaughter, aren't I?" she countered.

Nobody could protest that comeback, so I just said, "You sure are, honey, but you're looking pretty scrawny with all this intellection." Really, there was something that had begun to bother me about her skinniness and the anxious intensity of her lemur-like gaze. "Why don't you go inside and ask you g'gramma for a big peanut-butter sandwich and a glass of milk?"

"Later maybe," she said. "Right now I want you to tell me every last thing you remember about the Nine Worlds." She came over and leaned straight-armed on my couch and bored with the big eyes again.

"That's asking too much," I protested, "especially with this science-fiction angle you've added. You seem to know more about it than I do, so why don't you tell me the answers? Why do the frost giants always talk Russian?"

She leaned two inches closer and whispered, "Because the frost giants *are* the Russians, see?"

"Well," I said, trying to get back into the spirit of it all, "I have to admit that the Russians do talk gutteral and ho-ho-ho harshly and lumber around in fur coats and knock themselves out with monster construction projects and act obtuse but menacing, just like the frost giants."

"That's right," she told me, nodding. "Khrushchev was the giant Skyrmir, I'm pretty sure. Jotunheim and Asgard are Russia and America, all set to shoot missiles at each other across England and Europe, which must be Midgard, of course—though sometimes I think the English are the Vanir."

"Say, have you been reading all this crazy stuff in that gray book?" I asked her uneasily. "I remember now: three interlocking horns are Odin's symbol. Let me see it."

"Later maybe," she said, twisting the side with the book clamped to it away from my hand and then backing off a couple of steps. "Right now we've got to dig some important things out of your memory. G'gramps, there's a tradition that Odin wandered all over Midgard, and some of the other Nine Worlds too, in disguise. Do you know who Odin might be, like Skyrmir being Khrushchev or Balder Abraham Lincoln?"

"William O. Douglas?" I suggested wildly, making another attempt to play the game. "He traveled all

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over the world to see things for himself and he wrote a lot of books about it."

"I don't think so," she said, shaking her head, "but maybe it's not so important to know that. After all, Odin was one of the goods guys. For that matter, all the Aesir were pretty good, at least they were brave and well-intentioned, but there was one of them who wasn't . . ." She hesitated and for some reason I shivered. "Loki wasn't," she said and hesitated again, and as she said "Loki" and stared at me with those big eyes, the patio seemed to waver for a moment behind her and the sun grew dim. "Loki was always causing trouble. He was one of the Aesir, they adopted him, but he was always working the worst mischief he could. G'gramps, who was Loki?"

"Now let's stop all this right now," I commanded, "or we'll be getting to Ragnarok." I laughed and reached out to touzle her hair, but really I was a little frightened. You see, ever since I first ran across the Norse myths in third grade I've never believed for a second in that fakey tacked-on happy ending about the sons of Odin and Thor establishing a new world after the other gods and the giants were dead. It's always been clear to me that Ragnarok must lie in the future, a horror overhanging us all, a doom toward which the universe is relentlessly working—any other solution would be dramatically wrong. And right now I didn't want a little girl to glimpse the dread and despair that had gripped the heart of a third-grader and never quite let go.

I must have done a poor job of concealment, though, for what she said, backing out of reach again, was, "But G'gramps, don't you see that we've *got* to get to Ragnarok? —that that's what all this is leading up to? It all fits. The Midgard serpent, coiled around the world under the seas and never coming up till the end, is atomic submarines. The Fenris wolf, his jaws scraping earth and the stars, is spaceflight—and missiles! And Surtur, who came from Muspelheim and ended the war with a fireweapon that destroyed everything—he must have been the top general of a country, not America or Russia, that started lobbing atomic bombs. But G'gramps, which country was Muspelheim? Who was Surtur? And who was the one who tricked them all into it?—who was Loki?"

Now she was the one who was advancing, her big eyes pleading but fierce, and I was the one who was backing off a little, across my couch. She seemed to have changed, or maybe it was just that I now saw for the first time that her cheeks were starved-sunken and her dress was ragged and her skinny legs were scarred.

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"Who was Loki, G'gramps?" she repeated. "If you knew, you could stop him. We can't remember, we've got amnesia for that part. We sent back the book and the myths, so you'd know what was coming and figure out the rest, and stop it from happening, but that didn't do any good, so we had to try to come back ourselves. G'gramps, *please*—"

She reached out her hand, brushing my beard, and shook my shoulder. Her fingers were ice.

"G'gramps, who was Loki?"

"Stop it, I don't know!" I cried out, flinching away from her. *"I don't even know* your *name!"*

At that a shadow and a strong vibration passed across everything and when I opened my eyes again, she was gone.

My beard was gone too, though I had to rub my chin several times to convince myself of that.

Then I remembered that I never had a beard, certainly not a silver one. I also remembered that I don't have a great-granddaughter. I have one grandchild, a girl, but she's only two.

Oh, one other thing: my wife and a couple of friends remember seeing that gray weathered book with the Odin symbol around the house, but none of them ever looked into it. And now we can't find it anywhere.

So there you are, that's the entire experience, just as it happened. No, wait a moment, I have one slight correction to make—a correction that keeps me wondering.

I don't have a great-granddaughter . . . yet.

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1938, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233)
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According to photographic evidence in the files of The Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies (ITFCS), Isaac Asimov is six feet tall, weighs two hundred well-distributed pounds, has a long white beard, and enjoys a social drink. Who then the short, sagging, baby-smooth-faced teetotaler who claims to be Asimov really is, then, we have no idea. Except that he is raucous and has a smattering of science. But of one thing, reader, you may be sure—he's not your type.

HE'S NOT MY TYPE!

by Isaac Asimov

I SEEM TO BE A NON-CONFORMIST. THIS IS NOT BY ANY MEANS because I have deliberately set out to be one. On the contrary, nothing would suit me better than to fade into the surroundings. Unfortunately, it turns out that at any gathering I attend I seem, for some mysterious reason, to attract attention.

Sooner or later, some curious stranger is bound to ask, "Who is the loud-mouthed extravert over there?"* And someone else is bound to say, "That's Asimov" and accompany the information with several taps on the forehead, a gesture of whose significance I am uncertain.

In response to this, I am forced back on the mumbled defense that everyone is different and has his own peculiarities, so there. (It's either that or stop being a loud-mouthed whatchamacallit.)

* *Actually, he says "loud-mouthed nut" but I think the word "extravert" is more accurate and has a more literary ring to it.*

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And I'm not wrong either. The fact that everyone is different is known perfectly well to all of us. An infant quickly learns to tell his mother from other women and a young woman is very likely to be considered by her young man to be not only different from all others, but infinitely superior to all the others put together. I am told that young women (with less reason, no doubt) have similar feelings with regard to specific young men.

But placing these intuitively-felt individual differences on a hard, scientific foundation had to await the turn of the present century. Only then was it indubitably established that there was blood and blood.

Throughout history, men have attributed differences to blood—but all the wrong differences. There was masculine red blood and aristocratic blue blood; and people talked of blood-lines when they meant generations of a family. They spoke of good blood and of bad blood in the moral sense rather than the physical one, so that if you said of a person, "He has bad blood," you didn't mean he had leukemia, but that his father had once forged a check. "It's in the blood," people would say meaningfully.

When the actual differences among blood were discovered, it turned out to be a very prosaic matter. It had nothing to do with morals or temperament or one's place in life. It was just that blood from one person didn't always mix well with blood from another.

The consequences of this fact had been apparent for centuries actually. When someone was near death from loss of blood, it didn't take much imagination to decide that a little blood transferred into the patient's veins from another person in the full flush of health (and therefore able to spare a little blood) might stave off death. Occasionally, doctors tried this and occasionally the patient recovered. But occasionally the patient died almost at once.

The deaths were horrifying, of course, and doctors were forbidden by most enlightened governments to attempt transfusions.

In 1900, however, the matter was finally rationalized by an Austrian physician named Karl Landsteiner. He experimented by mixing red blood corpuscles from the blood of one individual with serum* from the blood of another.

In some cases, nothing happened. The corpuscles distributed themselves happily through the foreign serum and all was well. In other

* *The liquid portion of blood is called "plasma." If a protein clotting factor, fibrinogen, is removed from plasma, what is left is "serum." In practical matters, the two terms are virtually interchangeable.*

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cases, however, the corpuscles, upon being added to the serum adhered to each other in clumps. They had "agglutinated."

Clearly, then, there were at least two kinds of corpuscles and it seemed reasonable to suppose that the difference was chemical. One variety of corpuscle contained a chemical which, in the presence of the serum, reacted in such a way as to give rise to agglutination.

If we call this chemical "A" (you can't be simpler than that) then we can suppose there is a substance in the serum that reacts with it and we can call the serum-substance "anti-A."

Using this terminology we can say that if we have serum containing anti-A, we expect A corpuscles to agglutinate and other corpuscles not to agglutinate.

But this isn't all. It is also possible to obtain samples of serum from particular people that will *not* agglutinate A corpuscles but that *will* agglutinate corpuscles left untouched by anti-A. There must then be a second chemical present in some corpuscles, one which we can call (you guessed it) "B" and there must be varieties of serum that contain "anti-B."

We can now say that serum which contains anti-A will agglutinate A corpuscles but not B corpuscles, while serum which contains anti-B will agglutinate B corpuscles but not A corpuscles.

And still this isn't all. There are samples of red blood corpuscles which will agglutinate in both types of sera and which therefore contain *both* A and B. We can refer to these as AB corpuscles. Finally, there are red blood corpuscles which will agglutinate in neither type of sera and which therefore contain *neither* A nor B. These are O corpuscles ("oh", that is, and not "zero.")

Every person, then, belongs to one of four "blood groups" or "blood types" depending on whether his red blood corpuscles contain A, B, both A and B, or neither A nor B. Furthermore, tests show that each person contains those anti-substances in his serum which would *not* react with his own corpuscles. (Obviously, or he would be dead to begin with.)

We can prepare a small table then:

Blood type	*Corpuscles*	*Serum*
O	—	anti-A, anti-B
A	A	anti-B
B	B	anti-A
AB	A, B	—

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By keeping a supply of sera containing known anti-A and anti-B, any sample of blood can be quickly typed, and transfusion can then be made safe. Transfusion is possible, without complications, when donor and patient are of the same blood type. No agglutination takes place and the donated blood flows freely through the patient's blood vessels.

Things are not necessarily ruinous even when donor and patient are of different types.

To explain that, let's begin by supposing that the blood of a B donor is given to an A patient. The donated blood is, roughly, half corpuscles and half serum and each half is a source of possible trouble.

The serum of the B donor contains anti-A which could bring about the agglutinaton of the patient's A corpuscles. This is not particularly serious. The half-pint of serum donated by the B donor does not contain enough anti-A to do much damage, especially when it is quickly diluted by several quarts of the patient's own blood.

The second possibility is that the donor's B corpuscles may be agglutinated by the anti-B in the patient's serum. This is the real danger because it is the anti-B in an entire blood stream that must now be considered. If the corpuscles of the donated blood agglutinate, they are virtually useless for the performance of their chief function, that of transporting oxygen. Worse than that, the clumps of corpuscles will swirl through the blood stream, plugging tiny arteries in the kidney and elsewhere, and this is very likely to kill the patient.

In considering transfusion dangers, then, it is important to check the donor's red cells (not serum) and the patient's serum (not red cells.)

Begin with an AB donor. His AB corpuscles cannot safely be given to any patient with either anti-A or anti-B in his serum. This means that AB blood can be given *only* to an AB patient.

A sample of A blood can be donated only to patients without anti-A in the serum, which means that it can be given to either A or AB patients. Similarly a sample of B blood can be given to either B or AB patients. People with O blood have corpuscles that will not agglutinate in the presence of either anti-A or anti-B and such blood can be given to anyone. People of blood type O are therefore sometimes called "universal donors."*

* *This term is actually a slight exaggeration. Sometimes the anti-substance concentration in O blood is too high for comfort and wreaks a bit of havoc among the patient's corpuscles. Consequently, the practice of having donor and patient of the same blood type whenever possible is safest. It is also possible on occasion to do good by transfusing only plasma, eliminating the red blood corpuscles and with them virtually all the danger of transfusion.*

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This can be summarized in the following table:

Donor	*Patient*
AB	AB
A	AB, A
B	AB, B
O	AB, A, B, O

When much blood is needed for transfusions as during wars, or even during lesser catastrophes, blood type O is particularly desirable.

This reminds me, always, of an occasion during World War II, when I had given blood and was sitting at the Red Cross center with a glass of milk and a cookie, recovering from the ordeal. A loud-mouthed extravert sitting near-by was also recuperating and he announced himself to be of blood type O. I looked up and could see at once that he was not my type, for I am a B.

Someone asked the fellow why people of blood type O were so desired at the blood banks, and the fellow replied with an insufferable smugness I found very difficult to take, "Well, O blood is particularly *rich*, you see."

Fortunately, I recover from these blows to my pride quite quickly. I've been brooding about this one for only sixteen years and expect to get over it fairly soon.

Anyway, Landsteiner's discovery made transfusion safe, snatched uncounted numbers of lives out of the jaws of death, and, as a result, it took only a full generation for the powers who be to decide that he deserved a Nobel Prize in Medicine. He received it in 1930.

For purposes of transfusion there are four types of human blood, but the number is greater from the genetic viewpoint. Every person inherits two genes governing the particular blood groups I have been discussing, one from his mother and one from his father. Each gene can bring about the production of A, of B, or of neither, so that the genes are spoken of as belonging to the A, B, O group.

You can inherit any of six possible combinations then: OO, AO, AA, BO, BB, AB. When you possess the AO combination, the one A gene brings about the production of A corpuscles just as well as two A genes would. You are of blood type A, then, whether your combination is AA or AO. By similar reasoning, you are of blood type B, whether your combination is BB or BO. Your gene combination is your "genotype" and what you actually appear to be by test is your "phenotype."

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In other words, the six possible genotypes work out to four phenotypes.

But, you may ask, what does it matter whether you are AO or AA? Your blood reacts equally in either case so why make a point of it? As far as transfusion counts, to be sure, the difference is negligible. But consider—

If two AA individuals marry, each can contribute only A genes to their offspring. All their offspring *must* be of blood type A. On the other hand, if two AO individuals marry, then it is possible that each will contribute an O-gene to a particular offspring, which will then be OO and will test out as blood type O.

In other words, if two people, both of blood-type A marry, it is possible for an offspring to be of blood type O, without any hanky-panky having been involved. The existence of the AO genotype as opposed to the AA genotype is thus very important in paternity suits.

It was eventually found that there were two kinds of A corpuscles, one that reacted strongly with anti-A, and one that reacted weakly. The former was called A_1 and the latter A_2. This difference is of little importance in transfusion, but is, again, significant in paternity suits since, for example, two A_1 parents cannot have an A_2 child, and vice versa.

Counting the two A varieties, we have ten genotypes, which I won't bother to list, giving rise to six phenotypes:

O, A_1, A_2, B, A_1B, and A_2B

The reason why the A, B, O group of substances in the corpuscles was discovered as early as it was, rests with the fact that blood serum contains anti-substances that react with appropriate corpuscles and agglutinate them. But what if the corpuscles also contain other substances capable of bringing about agglutination which, however, do not make their presence felt, owing to the fact that the blood serum lacks the appropriate anti-substance?

If this were so, the only way of demonstrating the fact would be to produce the corresponding anti-substance artificially. This can be done by making use of the natural mechanisms of the animal body.

The body reacts to the injection of foreign proteins (and of certain other substances all lumped under the heading of "antigen") by producing an "antibody" which reacts with that antigen, removing it from circulation and rendering it harmless. Such a reaction is highly specific; that is the antibody will react with the antigen and will react only weakly if at all with any other substance. Serum obtained from such a

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sensitized bloodstream can then be used to detect the presence of this particular antigen through some sort of precipitating or clumping reaction.

In 1927, Landsteiner was able to show that rabbit blood could be sensitized in such a fashion that it would agglutinate some human corpuscles and not others, without reference to the A, B, O system. That is, some A corpuscles would be agglutinated but some not; some B corpuscles would be agglutinated and some not; and so on.

The obvious deduction was that there were additional corpuscle substances that were inherited and independently of the A, B, O groups. These were labeled M and N, and any individual could be of blood type M, of blood type N, or of blood type MN. Sera containing anti-M and anti-N could be obtained from properly sensitized rabbits, and the human blood types could then be determined by noting whether corpuscles were agglutinated by anti-M, by anti-N, or by both.

This triples the number of phenotypes, for a person who is of blood group O, can check out as blood group OM, ON, or OMN. The analogous situation is true for the other blood groups. Out of the six genes: O, A_1, A_2, B, M and N, then, 18 phenotypes are possible.

In 1940, Alexander S. Wiener, an American physician, discovered that when rabbit blood was sensitized against red blood corpuscles obtained from a Rhesus monkey, the rabbit's serum could then be used to distinguish among blood from different human beings in still another fashion.

Apparently then, the blood corpuscles contain substances that belong neither to the A, B, O group nor to the M, N group. The new substances are referred to as the "Rh group", "Rh" standing for Rhesus monkey.

I hesitate to try to explain the ins and outs of the various Rh groups because for twenty years now there has been a fairly violent running fight between various groups of immunologists as to just how to explain those same ins and outs—and I do not wish to get involved in it.

Apparently, though, there are at least twelve different Rh phenotypes that can be detected by using four different anti-subtances. The three best known of the anti-substances are called anti-C, anti-D and anti-E by some of the people in the field.

One of the phenotypes can be detected by the fact that the red blood corpuscles do not agglutinate in response to any of these three anti-substances and this phenotype is called "Rh negative." All the other

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phenotypes agglutinate in response to one or another (in some cases, to more than one) of these anti-substances and all eleven are lumped together under the general heading of "Rh positive."

This turns out to be of importance not to transfusion, but in childbirth. When an Rh-negative mother is married to an Rh-positive father, the child may inherit, from the father, one of the Rh genes which will make it Rh-positive. This fact becomes true at the moment of conception and manifests itself during embryonic life. The situation then arises of an Rh-negative mother carrying an Rh-positive fetus.

The Rh-positive substances of the fetal corpuscles may make their way across the placental barrier into the maternal blood stream. The mother manufactures an anti-substance in response (since these Rh-positive substances do not naturally occur in her own blood). This anti-substance may then make its way back across the placental barrier into the fetal blood-stream. The poor fetus now has both the substance and the anti-substance in the blood and is, so to speak, allergic to itself. If it is not still-born altogether, it is born very sick with a condition called "erythroblastosis fetalis." It is usually fatal unless extensive transfusion is arranged for at once in order to remove the troublesome anti-substance.

The situation does not always arise, of course, and it almost never arises at the first pregnancy. It is estimated that about 1 birth out of 400 in the United States involves erythroblastosis fetalis. Still doctors like to be ready, just in case, which is why pregnant women are routinely typed for the Rh groups.

In any case, if we consider the 12 Rh phenotypes, we can see that each of the 18 phenotypes involving the A, B, O and M, N groups can be subdivided into twelve classes, one for each of the Rh phenotypes. The total number of blood types involving these three groups is therefore 18 times 12, or 216.

These various phenotypes are not, of course, evenly distributed. In the United States for instance, 45 percent of the population is of blood type O, 42 percent of blood type A, 10 percent of blood type B and 3 percent of blood type AB.

This distribution is American but not world-wide. There are American Indian tribes that are 98 percent O and 2 percent A, while other American Indian tribes are 80 percent A and 20 percent O. Practically no American Indians are B or AB.

The usual explanation for this is that the American Indians are descended from small groups of individuals who made their way across

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Siberia, over the Bering Strait, and down the American continents. The individuals who made it happened not to include any B types. (Since B is considerably less common than either A or O in the world as a whole, it is the more easily "lost" in small groups.) Alternatively, the comparatively few B individuals that reached America happened to die out without establishing a family line.

This loss of a particular gene among small groups is called "genetic drift."

On the other hand, blood type B, while always in a minority, is most strongly represented (up to 30 percent) in Central Asia. Its frequency declines as one travels westward. It is down to 20 percent on the European border, to 15 percent in western Russia, 10 percent in Germany, and 5 percent in France. Some people suggest that the B gene was brought into Europe by successive floods of Asian invaders, notably the Huns and Mongols.

In fact, there are attempts made to follow human migrations by tracing the variations in gene frequencies. These, however, are not always easy to work out and modern means of transportation are so churning up the human race that any remaining trace will, it seems to me, shortly be wiped out.

Anthropologists also try to work out a division of the human species into smaller groups on the basis of gene frequencies. For instance, the American Indians and the Australian Aborigines are both marked by lack of the B gene. However, the American Indians are unusually high in M and low in N, whereas the Australian aborigines are unusually high in N and low in M.

Again, Asian individuals of blood type A are almost exclusively A_1, while in Europe and Africa both A_1 and A_2 are strongly represented among such individuals. As another example, there is one Rh gene that seems to occur almost exclusively in Africa.

The most interesting result obtained by such subdivisions-by-blood-group-frequencies involves the Rh series. People native to the Americas, to Asia, to Australia and to Africa, are virtually never Rh-negative. Where Rh-negative does occur, it almost always turns out that there are European natives among the ancestors of the individual.

It is Europe, then which is the great reservoir of Rh-negativity. Among Europeans and their descendants on the other continents (including the Americans, of course), one out of seven individuals is Rh-negative.

How does this happen? Are there any areas in Europe which are focal points for Rh-negative genes, as the Mongols of Central Asia

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seem to have been the focal point for B. The answer is "Yes" for there is a small group of people in northern Spain and these are called the Basques.* Among the Basques, one out of three is Rh-negative, and nowhere else in the world is there so high a concentration of this phenotype.

It would seem, then, that the Basques represent the remaining remnant of a group of Rh-negative "Early Europeans" who were flooded out by the invasions of the Rh-positive "Indo-European peoples" who now populate Europe. In the mountain fastnesses of Europe's far west they managed to retain a last grip.

This possibility is made the more attractive by the fact that the Basque language is not Indo-European in nature and, in fact, has no known relationship to any other language, living or dead.

Nor have new blood groups come to an end with 1940 and the Rh series. Animals continue to be sensitized in various ways and to produce sera that can, in turn, be used to type individuals in new fashions. New blood types with names such as Duffy, Kell, Kidd, Lewis and Lutheran (usually named after the patients in whose blood they were first located) are constantly being reported.

As of now about 60 different blood type series are known. Some of them are uncommon, of course, and no one serological laboratory is equipped to classify human blood in each of the sixty series. (The best laboratories can handle about twenty, I think.)

It has been calculated that the number of different phenotypes that could actually be differentiated by the proper sera, if all were available, would come to (hold your breath now!) no less than 1,152,900,000,000,000,000, or a little over one quintillion.

This number is 400,000,000 times the population of the earth, so that it is highly unlikely that any two people (barring identical twins) are of absolutely identical blood type. In fact, it is easily conceivable that no two human beings who ever lived (barring identical twins) were of absolutely identical blood type. Not only is he not your type; no one is anybody's type, most likely.

And that explains why it is perfectly all right for me to be a loudmouthed extravert.

—I think.

** At this point, I am tempted to maneuver the article in such a way that I can casually refer to "putting all my Basques in one exit" but this issue will be coming out during the Christmas season and I shall refrain.*

See page 63 for an addendum to Dr. Asimov's November column.

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BOOKS

SF—THE 7TH ANNUAL OF THE YEAR'S BEST, Judith Merril, Simon & Schuster, $3.95

THE SURVIVOR, AND OTHERS, H. P. Lovecraft and August Derleth, Ballantine Books, 35¢

THE THIRTY-FIRST OF JUNE, J. B. Priestley, Doubleday, $3.50

NO ANTHOLOGIST IN THIS FIELD works as hard as does Judith Merril; her reading is prodigious, and THE 7TH ANNUAL OF THE YEAR'S BEST shows an improvement over some of its predecessors, not all of which have been to my own taste. Besides the SF magazines, she has tapped the Atlantic Monthly, Saturday Evening Post, Esquire, Mademoiselle, Rogue, The Village Voice, Gent, and The New Yorker, as well as several books; and has commissioned original articles by James Blish and Anthony Boucher. Some of the above would have been, in my opinion, the better untapped. George P. Elliott's *Among The Dangs,* for example, I find an insufferably long and incredibly tedious presumable allegory which has all the sparkle of Dr. Johnson's *Rasellas* and none of its flavor. But Miss Merril's love-affair with this dull morality is of long standing, she has managed to get it in this year because it was reprinted, so I credit her with sincerity, at least. The two SEPost items, by Kaatje Hurlbut and Robert F. Young, are thin and mild, as is to be expected, considering the source. There is a dull dull dull British import by David Rome, a poor fantasy western by Julian F. Grow, another computer piece (this is their year)—by J. F. ("Doc") Bone—which is reasonable but gimmicky, a strained vignette of Ray ("Mr. Sardonicus") Russell's, fancy poetry by Aiken and Kumin; *good* stories by Anne McCaffrey and R. Bretnor and Muriel Spark and Pohl/Kornbluth.

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The very good *Ottmar Balleau x 2* of George Bamber (and here let me mention a niggling annoyance which crops up whenever I see that title—isn't "Balleau" intended to rhyme with "times two"? And, if so, shouldn't it be "Balleux"—or something?) is an interesting study of paranoia from the inside, Ward Moore's fine *It Becomes Necessary* is an excellent example of what Miss Merril calls "Social Science Fiction"—exile from a Fascist America discovers things about her own patriotism, Fred Brown has a cute squib on the time paradox, Jules Feiffer provides a deadly cartoon on the horrors of *bauhaus* architecture; and there is interesting reading by Leo Szilard, Kit Reed, David R. Bunch, Alice Glaser, Fritz Leiber, Cordwainer Smith and John Wyndham.

A few of the remaining items rate particular comment. There is a wordy and baffling "poem" by John Dos Passos. And in case you have wondered what sort of SF the New Yorker finds acceptable, the answer is, a grim story about an old spaceman in the authentic Hemingway manner about an old bullfighter. Edward Gorey, an illustrator whose work defies description, teams up with poet Paul Dehn for an Anti-Bomb bit which demonstrates once again that the British Disarmers are maybe really Anti-Bomb but are certainly really Anti-American: you'd no more know the Russians have Bombs from this than from that song of theirs which goes "There's a little red button in *America*" (italics mine). Mack Reynolds and Lawrence Durrell do not disgrace themselves here, but neither do they shine. And James Blish provides a really stimulating article on the prospects for advancement in medical science. Also of considerable interest are the editor's comments on her new definition of SF—"Speculative Fiction"—and Anthony Boucher's sigh-laden lament on the current state of Science Fiction books.

Not a bad buy for the money.

THE SURVIVOR AND OTHERS is an intriguing and entertaining little goodie. Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Heaven knows, had a talent for writing which was of no mean proportion; only what he did with this talent was a shame and a caution and an eldritch horror. If he had only gotten the Hell down out of his auntie's attic and obtained a job with the Federal Writers Project of the WPA, he could have turned out guidebooks which would be classics and joys to read, forever. Only he stayed up there, muffled to the tip of his long, gaunt New England chin against the cold which lay more in his heart than in his thermometer, living on 19¢ worth of beans a day, rewriting (for pennies) the crappy MSS of writers whose

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complete illiteracy would have been a boon to all mankind; and producing ghastly, grisly, ghoulish and horrifying works of his own as well—of man-eating *Things* which foraged in graveyards, of human/beastie crosses which grew beastier and beastlier as they grew older, of gibbering shoggoths, and Elder Beings which smelt real bad and were always trying to break through Threshholds and Take Over—rugous, squamous, amorphous nasties, abetted by thin, gaunt New England eccentrics who dwelt in attics and who eventually were Never Seen Or Heard From Again. Serve them damn well right, I say.

In short, Howard was a *twitch,* boys and girls, and that's all there is to it.

Of course, August Derleth feels different. August Derleth is an incredibly active, incredibly prolific writer who lives in Wisconsin and has written something like 811 books under his own name; the pseudonyms, who counts? In a way, August Derleth may be said to have invented H. P. Lovecraft, having rescued him from well-deserved obscurity in the *Weird Tales* files via beautifully printed case-bound volumes put out by Arkham House, an August Derleth enterprise. We all have our time-bound longings. Horace Gold would love to have made love to Nefertiti. I would give lots and lots to have poured tea for Dr. Johnson. And August Derleth, I feel it in my bones, would have sold his soul to an Eldritch Horror for to have collaborated with H. P. Lovecraft. And now he has.

"Among the papers of the late Howard Phillips Lovecraft were various notes and/or outlines for stories which he did not live to write. [*Ha!*—Ed.]. . . *These scattered notes were put together by August Derleth, whose finished stories grown from Lovecraft's suggested plots, are offered here as a final collaboration, post-mortem."*

"Post-mortem" is indeed *le mot juste.* If ever there was a man who loved graveyards and the thought that what was in them wasn't really quite dead, it was Lovecraft. And if there was a man who loved Lovecraft, it is Derleth. He does his best to conjure up the late master's prose from its essential salts, but he doesn't make it. Mr. Derleth is really too healthy and wholesome a Mid-Westerner, and they don't grow ghouls in Sauk Center the way they used to in legend-haunted Innsmouth. But Mr. Derleth *tries.* Take, for instance (better you than me), Lovecraft's preoccupation with stinks—There are no less than fifteen distinct references to them here, semi-classified, as *"reptilian musk . . . strong reptilian musk . . . powerful reptilian musk . . . strong musk . . . nauseatingly strong musk . . . pervasive and highly repellant musk . . . so powerful a*

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musk . . ." and so on, including just plain "*musk*", plus "a charnel odor of decay", presumably for bad smell fanciers who don't care for musk in any form. And, too, all the wicked old books are here: *Pnakotic Manuscripts, R'lyeh Texts, Unaussprechlichen Kulten* ["of von Junzt", of course—not to be confused with any other *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*], *Book of Eibon, De Vermis Mysteries,* etc., plus one new to me, the *Dhol Chants,* plus a rather merry-sounding title for so grim a collection: "the Count d'Erlette's *Cules des Goules*"—which I'm afraid must be a misprint for "*Cultes*", unless the learned Count really devoted a volume to the buttocks of ghouls—wouldn't surprise me one bit. And of course, of course, the *Necronomicon* of Abdul Alhazred! Whee!

The familiar monsters are out in full force, too: Elder Gods, Ancient Ones, Great Old Ones, Azathoth—oh, this is *good,* listen: "the idiot god, Azathoth, that amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity"—not just *some* infinity, mind you—Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Great Cthulhu, Shub-Niggurath ("the black goat of the woods with a thousand young"), Hastur "the unspeakable", and all the rest of the girls. As I say, Derleth tries hard, but he doesn't quite turn the trick, because he is as sane as they come and Lovecraft was as nutty as a five-dollar fruitcake.

Verdict: Good, wholesome entertainment for young and old alike. Come early, and bring the whole family.

THE THIRTY-FIRST OF JUNE has for its subtitle, "A Tale of True Love, Enterprise, And Progress, In The Arthurian And Ad-Atomic Ages," and I guess that's fairly accurate. This is not the J. B. Priestley of (my favorites) the good novels of London in the Thirties, *Angel Pavement* and *They Walk In The City,* nor of the several plays on the nature of time. This is a gentle, fun-poking, whimsical Priestley, writing in what I must call a wibberley vein —not that Leonard Wibberley invented it, but because he is probably the best-known modern practitioner; and besides, his name makes a good adjective. Here we have King Meliot of Peradore, "High Lord of Bergamore, Marralore and Parlot—Overlord of Lancington, Low Moss and Three Bridges"; his daughter, Princess Melicent; Ninette, a pretty and conniving lady-in-waiting; Master Malgrim, a suave sorcerer who is looking for a court appointment; his uncle, Master Marlagram, a shaggy sorcerer, who isn't; Grumet, dwarf to Meliot; two soldiers, Jack and Fred, given to low jokes in a kind'earted fashion

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—all on the Arthurian plane. On the Ad-Atomic plane are Sam Penty, a nice young man; Dimmock, his ad-agency boss, who has a nervous stomach; Cap'n Plunkett, a tosspot entrepreneur of questionable ventures; the barmaid of the Black Horse; and Anne Dutton-Swift and Philip Spencer-Smith, "U types forced into the rat-race." The two planes cross, re-cross, sub-cross and super-cross—Sam and Melicent fall in love—the two sorcerers fall into rivalry—there are doings in dungeons, on TV shows, at tournaments, in bars—with dragons, Scotland Yard, and what-all-not. This is a pleasant trifle which might make an amusing musical comedy. $3.50 is rather a lot for 168 pages, even with John Cooper's droll drawings, but it's the sort of thing I'd recommend without hesitation for a hospitalized friend. Oh, and there's some mild social satire, too, if you don't want to read for fun alone.

—Avram Davidson

***Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot:* LVIII**

Like George Washington, Ferdinand Feghoot could not tell a lie. This was dramatically demonstrated in 2362, when he rescued Magda Millsap-Borgia, most famous and beautiful of operatic sopranos, from the clutches of Adrian Haggis, an infamous booking agent who, through illegal time-travelling connections, kidnaped great female voices from the past and the future. Because of him, the Twentieth Century was renowned for having more super-sopranos than any other period in history.

Luckily, Magda was snatched from her dressing room in the vast Pinole Opera House just before she was to receive the coveted *Tony*, an award like the *Oscar* of pioneer days. Feghoot, who was supposed to present it, set off in instant pursuit, but Haggis hid her so cunningly that a full week went by in her world before her return. The news media had a regular field day—she had eloped with a Martian! she had eloped with her husband! she was having an affair with Ferdinand Feghoot, who also was missing! When she came back, it was all Feghoot could do to pacify the reporters.

"You managed them ever so nicely," she told him at supper that evening. "But—naughty boy!—why did you say I'd been held captive in the mountains of California? Ooh, what a *fib!*"

"My dear," replied Ferdinand Feghoot, "I told them only the absolute truth. I said I had rescued you from the High C Era."

—Grendel Briarton

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For four days a week "Henry Slesar" is vice-president of a New York advertising agency; nights and weekends he writes. And writes. And writes. At thirty-five, he has published four hundred stories, including novels and TV shows, and has appeared in almost every Science Fiction and crime magazine, won the Mystery Writers of America "Edgar" award in 1959 for his novel The Grey Flannel Shroud, *has been in sixteen anthologies, etc. & c, including fourteen stories in* Playboy *and thirty scripts for "Alfred Hitchcock Presents". In short, Mr. Slesar is both versatile and prolific, and his real name is none of your business. Here we have the story of an old man who was, to all appearances, dead; a woman who was faithful; and a physician who was curious.*

WAY-STATION

by Henry Slesar

DYING OLD MEN SADDEN DOCtors. Saddened this one, Dr. Theodore Bray, who looked at the sinking mercury in the sphygmomanometer, and listened to the shallow breath barely escaping the parchment lips. He became conscious of the woman at his elbow, the quiet, dark-haired daughter with the waxy face. He stopped appraising symptoms, and tried to think of words of sympathy.

"I'm afraid there isn't much hope," he said. "His pulse is failing, and his pressure's almost at bottom. How old is your father, Miss Lanning?"

"Eighty-one. Is there nothing at all you can do?"

"Make him comfortable, try to relieve some of the congestion. Would you mind leaving me alone with him?"

The pupils of her gray eyes flickered, like turning wheels.

"Is that necessary?"

"I think it might be best."

Still reluctant, she moved silently out of the bedroom. She was the quietest woman he had ever seen. Not a floorboard creaked. Not a rustle, a whisper of clothing. Nothing. He thought of the word eerie.

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The old man was groaning. Pain, the doctor's enemy. Bray reached into his medical bag. There was no cure in the little rubber-topped bottles he carried, only solace. He removed one, filled a syringe, swabbed the scrawny arm with alcohol.

A few minutes later, the old man opened his eyes but didn't see him. "Ah, Jamey," he breathed.

"I'm a doctor," Bray said. "I'm here to help you."

"Ah, Jamey, the orchard," the old man sighed. "An apple is like a kiss from God. Pick me a ripe one. Aaah," he said, in ecstasy.

"Can you hear me, Mr. Lanning?"

"There was a time," the dying one said, "when I was young. I'd stand beneath the trees, Jamey, and then I'd fly to the highest limb and pick off the sweetest fruit. It grows at the top, you know, the sweetest of the apples. But that was when I was young, and could still fly."

Bray smiled gently. "Could you really fly, old man?"

"It was all right, in the orchard. That was all right, Jamey, with no one about to see." There was a whine in the thin voice. "I wasn't breaking no rules, Jamey, not I. Me who was always a stickler. A little bit of flying only, with no one about, and I was young. Ah, them red, red apples!"

He began to mutter, and his eyes closed again.

He was asleep.

Dr. Bray straightened, and looked towards the door. The woman was standing there, quiet as a secret thought. She came towards him, her face no longer placid, but fixed and full of anger.

"What are you doing? What have you done to my father?"

"Done? I've merely given him a sedative—"

"I didn't ask you to do that! Why was he talking? He hasn't talked in days."

"It must have been his reaction to the drug. He was remembering things, the past. He was talking of flying . . ."

For a moment, Bray expected a blow. The woman lifted both arms in an attitude of checked violence, and her eyes flashed.

"It's nonsense. He's senile—"

"Perhaps. And sometimes, under heavy sedation, people say odd things."

She was somewhat calmer, the fire banked. "Thank you, doctor. If you're sure there's nothing else you can do for him, I'll say goodnight."

"I still feel that a hospital—"

"If he's dying, I'd rather he die here."

Bray took up his bag. "That's up to you. I'll stop by in the evening and see how he is."

"Must you?"

Bray flushed. "I'll stop by, Miss Lanning."

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He was troubled by the visit for the rest of the day; not so much by impending death as by a sense of unreality. As he was about to leave his office that night, he made a sudden decision to put his portable fluoroscope in the back of his station wagon.

When he showed up at the Lanning house, lugging the instrument, the woman greeted him with indignation.

"What is that?" she said. "Why are you bringing that here?"

"If you don't mind, I'd like to examine your father again."

"You mean you think there's hope?"

"I didn't say that," he answered carefully. "The complications are such—well, I'd just like to have a look."

"What does this instrument do?"

"Miss Lanning," Dr. Bray sighed, "would you mind if I saw your father now?"

She stood aside for him, and he felt almost triumphant. He took the machine into the bedroom, closed the door, and plugged in the fluoroscope. He had just placed it over the old man's chest, when he realized he was in the presence of death.

He sighed deeply, made an automatic check of heartbeat and pulse, and then switched on the fluoroscope for a post-mortem look at the old man's interior.

He saw no congestion.

Nor were there heart or lungs.

There was a V-shaped organ that might have produced the pulsations of his body, but it was not a heart. There was a network of winding tubes creating senseless patterns throughout the thorax.

There were no lungs, and no heart.

He flicked off the light and stared in disbelief at the old face. It was just a face. Beak-nosed, the flesh falling away from bone, hollowing the eye-sockets, the skeleton approach of the very old.

Lamp on again, and staring at the screen.

No lungs, no heart. A strange, disorderly tangle of alien organs, impossible to comprehend, to understand, to believe.

"A freak," he said aloud, stunned and even exhilarated by the discovery. "The most amazing freak . . ."

"Dr. Bray!"

He cursed himself for not locking the door. He turned off the fluoroscope lamp, and found himself babbling at the woman.

"I'm sorry, Miss Lanning, I'm afraid your father—"

She looked at the still figure and went unhurriedly to the bed. She leaned over and touched the dry lips as if seeking breath, distrustful of his opinion. Then she shut her eyes, mumbled something that might have been prayer, and straightened up. Her eyes opened, glistening faintly.

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"He's dead," she said numbly. "Thank you for your services, doctor. Good night."

"It's more than that, Miss Lanning." He tried to control his excitement. "I'm going to ask you to let me perform an autopsy. The cause of death isn't at all certain . . ."

"He had pneumonia."

"I really must insist, Miss Lanning. There's something very odd about your father's internal organs, something I've never seen before. For the sake of—medicine, I beg you to allow the autopsy."

"No," she said flatly. "There must be no desecration of his body, doctor."

"You mustn't look at it that way—"

"Our religion forbids it, Dr. Bray, that's all there is to it. Would you please leave now."

He was in an agony of frustration.

"This may come as a shock, but your father's internal structure is not—" He stepped forward, forgetting courtesy, sympathy, his mouth hard. "Miss Lanning, I am coroner of this county as well as a physician, and if necessary, I can obtain a legal demand for your father's body. It would be simpler if you gave your consent, because one way or another, I intend to make this investigation."

She caught her breath sharply. "You can do that? Force me to let you have him?"

"I can."

She folded her arms and sat down, quietly.

"I don't want this to happen," she said softly. "If I cannot stop you legally, perhaps I can appeal to you morally."

"I'm afraid that religion—"

"I don't mean that." She looked up boldly. "If I took you somewhere, to another place, not far from here, would you come?"

"Take me somewhere?"

"Your car is outside; I can direct you to this place, less than fifteen miles from the house. When you see it, I believe you will understand why this autopsy must not happen."

"I'm afraid this is too much mystery for me—"

"It's not a mystery. I will tell you all. Show you everything. You will learn more than any man of your time has ever known about—people like my father. The ones with no hearts. The ones who have flown."

"Flown?"

"What you heard was no delirium, Dr. Bray. My father could fly when he was still young and agile. The Rules forbid it, but the power was in his body. Will you come with me?"

He examined her face, wondering if he had met a freak and a lunatic in one incredible day. Then he said:

"All right, Miss Lanning. I'll come with you."

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They drove for half an hour, in total silence broken only by the crisp left-and-right directions of the woman. They were off the main highway almost at once, and onto side roads that bore no U.S. or state designation. Once, they struck out on a rocky dirt road that seemed impassable for anything but horses and hikers; Dr. Bray's six-year-old Buick jounced and shivered in the ruts.

Finally, she told him to stop.

They climbed out of the car, and found themselves flanked by deep forest.

"There's nothing here," Bray said. "We're in the middle of nowhere—"

"Follow me," the woman said.

She walked into the woods, and the Doctor, carrying his flashlight, stumbled after her. There were no trails, no guideposts, no tree blazes, nothing to mark the unerring passage of the woman. She walked surely, rapidly, and Bray found himself panting, tripping over vines and dead branches.

"What is this?" he said anxiously. "Where are we going?"

"Almost there," she said.

She paused in a grove of elms so dense that not a hint of the night's full moonlight reached it. Straight into the thick of them she went, urging Bray to follow. He was afraid, but he was too curious to protest.

There was a clearing, hidden from the world.

She was stooping down, and pushing aside the brambles and leaves that covered the center of it.

"Look," she said.

It was a black, gaping hole, some fifteen feet in diameter, penetrating an unguessable distance into the earth.

"Good God," Bray said. "What is it?"

"An entrance," the woman said. "There is a rope ladder; will you trust me and follow?"

"But what is it? An abandoned mine shaft?"

"Something like that," she smiled. Then she lowered herself to the first rung. "Are you coming?"

Bray looked at his clothes, already ripped and dusty from the wild trek through the woods. "All right," he said, grimly. "I've gone this far."

He followed her on the ladder.

The distance seemed enormous; the sides of the hole were smooth and slippery. There was rung after rung to descend; he began to feel dizzy and ill. After several minutes of the downward climb, he paused, holding on desperately, and said:

"How much further?"

"Not far," her voice said below, echoing. "Not far, doctor."

He resumed the climb.

Eventually, his feet touched bottom. He flicked on the flashlight, and saw that they were in a

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cavern of impressive size; he looked for remnants of mining materials, but saw none. The roof was shored with timbers, and the floor was gritty but level. There was a kerosene torch on the wall; she lit it.

"What is this place? Where are we?"

"Look around you, doctor."

He moved the circle of light about, and illuminated the low row of parallel wooden boxes on the cavern floor. There seemed to be dozens of them; even hundreds, he thought later, as they marched along the stone corridor. Each was roughly eight feet long and three feet wide; each box was lidded. They stretched on to a vanishing point his flashlight couldn't probe.

"Boxes!" he said. "What are they? What's in them?"

"They're open, doctor. See for yourself."

He went cautiously to one, and, holding the flashlight in his left hand, lifted the lid.

There was a body in the box. It was the body of an old woman, either recently deceased or remarkably preserved.

He closed it rapidly, and looked at Miss Lanning aghast.

"Coffins," he whispered. "The whole place is full of coffins. But whose? How did they get here?"

"They were brought here, doctor."

"But who brought them? Why?" He looked about wonderingly. "An underground graveyard—"

"No," the woman said. "Not a graveyard. Only a way-station. Our graveyard is not here, nor above this ground, nor anyplace on your world. That's why I didn't want you to perform the autopsy; my father's body must join the others here, in this place."

"I still don't understand, Miss Lanning."

She sat on a coffin, unsqueamish, impassive as ever.

"A little over one thousand years ago," she said, "our people came to your world; an exploration team of eight families, for on our planet, the women share equally in the exploits of the men. There was an error in the calculation of gravity force, and the vehicle crashed upon making its descent. Three of our number were killed, but the others survived to become our ancestors."

Dr. Bray cursed himself. He had been wrong after all; freaks and lunatics could be encountered in one day; here was living proof.

"And just where did your—people come from?"

"From a planet in the star system Andromeda, the homeland to which all of us must someday return. And return we shall, this is our faith. For a thousand years we have waited for the Light to appear in the heavens, for the vessel of our homecoming. We are a patient race, and we believe."

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"You mean you—your father—"

"Centuries ago, we learned the wisdom of assimilation. The early descendants of the Survivors learned the lesson through pain and suffering. They failed to conceal their alien differences, their powers of levitation. For this failure, they were either burned as witches or revered as saints; neither recognition was desirable. We learned to Assimilate, Live, and Wait. This is our Instruction. It is the Rule. So we wait, doctor, for the Light to take us home."

"But these bodies—"

"A way-station, doctor, as I said. On our world, Life is not a brief episode as it is on Earth; we do not age, sicken, and die as you do. It is only in the gross atmosphere of your planet that our arteries wither, but still we do not die and decay . . ."

"You mean they're *alive*? All these—" He waved a limp hand over the field of coffins.

"On your world—dead. On ours—they will live again. This is why, when any of our people 'die' they are brought to some secret place below the ground, to be kept and guarded until the day of the Light. With the help of our physicians, and the healing balm of our own atmosphere, they will live once more."

"And what if the ship never comes?"

"It will come," the woman said, utterly confident.

The doctor stood up, slowly, nonchalantly.

"I understand," he said. "But now we really must be going, Miss Lanning . . ."

She smiled. "You haven't believed me, doctor."

"Yes, of course I did." He strolled towards the rope ladder. "We won't hold any autopsy, not if you feel so strongly about it."

The woman rose and joined him. She put her hand on the first rung of the ladder.

"I can't believe you mean that, doctor. I'm sure I've made you more curious than ever about my father's body, haven't I?"

"Let's go up, Miss Lanning, please!"

"Patience, doctor," she said, and reached for the flaming torch on the rock wall. She held it in front of her, her eyes glowing in its glare, and then placed the torch at the bottom rung of the rope ladder. It caught fire at once, and began to burn swiftly.

"Stop!" Bray cried. "What are you doing?"

"Back, doctor," she said, holding the torch before her. "Stay back, please."

"The ladder—"

"There's nothing you can do now. It must burn."

The flames had already eaten the visible portion of the rope; now they were climbing, greedily, towards the top, the heavy smoke drifting into the stone chamber.

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Bray coughed, and stepped back. "You can't do this!" he shouted hoarsely. "Is there no way out of here?"

"No other exit, doctor, we made certain of that."

"You're crazy! You're a lunatic—"

"I could not afford to let you repeat my story, doctor; our people have suffered enough persecution—"

"You think I belive that?" Bray coughed. "That crazy story?" He spun about wildly. "There must be some way out—"

"No, doctor," she said. "For you, there is no way."

She stepped to the smoke-filled hole, and her feet left the ground. And what went up, never came down again.

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Once upon a time there was a man named Laocöon . . .

PUNCH

by Frederik Pohl

THE FELLOW WAS OVER SEVEN feet tall and when he stepped on Buffie's flagstone walk one of the stones split with a dust of crushed rock. "Too bad," he said sadly, "I apologize very much. Wait."

Buffie was glad to wait, because Buffie recognized his visitor at once. The fellow flickered, disappeared and in a moment was there again, now about five feet two. He blinked with pink pupils. "I materialize so badly," he apologized. "But I will make amends. May I? Let me see. Would you like the secret of transmutation? A cure for simple virus diseases? A list of twelve growth stocks with spectacular growth certainties inherent in our development program for your planet Earth?"

Buffie said he would take the list of growth stocks, hugging himself and fighting terribly to keep a straight face. "My name is Charlton Buffie," he said, extending a hand gladly. The alien took it curiously, and shook it, and it was like shaking hands with a shadow.

"You will call me 'Punch,' please," he said. "It is not my name but it will do, because after all this projection of my real self is only a sort of puppet. Have you a pencil?" And he rattled off the names of twelve issues Buffie had never heard of.

That did not matter in the least. Buffie knew that when the aliens gave you something it was money in the bank. Look what they had given the human race. Faster-than-light space ships, power sources from hitherto nonradioactive elements like silicon, weapons of great force and metal-working processes of great suppleness.

Buffie thought of ducking into the house for a quick phone call to his broker, but instead he invited Punch to look around his apple orchard. Make the most of every moment, he said to himself, every moment with one of these guys is worth ten thousand dollars. "I would enjoy your apples

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awfully," said Punch, but he seemed disappointed. "Do I have it wrong? Don't you and certain friends plan a sporting day, as Senator Wenzel advised me?"

"Oh, sure! Certainly. Good old Walt told you about it, did he? Yes." That was the thing about the aliens, they liked to poke around in human affairs. They said when they came to Earth that they wanted to help us, and all they asked of us in return was that they be permitted to study our ways. It was nice of them to be so interested, and it was nice of Walt Wenzel, Buffie thought, to send the alien to him. "We're going after mallard, down to Little Egg, some of the boys and me. There's Chuck—he's the mayor here, and Jer—Second National Bank, you know, and Padre—"

"That is it!" cried Punch. "To see you shoot the mallard." He pulled out an Esso road map, overtraced with golden raised lines, and asked Buffie to point out where Little Egg was. "I cannot focus well enough to stay in a moving vehicle," he said, blinking in a regretful way. "Still, I can meet you there. If, that is, you wish—"

"I do! I do! I do!" Buffie was painfully exact in pointing out the place. Punch's lips moved silently, translating the golden lines into polar space-time coordinates, and he vanished just as the station wagon with the rest of the boys came roaring into the carriage drive with a hydramatic spatter of gravel.

The boys were extremely impressed. Padre had seen one of the aliens once, at a distance, drawing pictures of the skaters in Rockefeller Center, but that was the closest any of them had come. "God! What luck." "Did you get a super-hairpin from him, Buffie?" "Or a recipe for a nyew, smyooth martini with dust on it?" "Not Buffie, fellows! He probably held out for something *real* good, like six new ways to—Oh, excuse me, Padre."

"But seriously, Buffie, these people are unpredictably generous. Look how they built that dam in Egypt! Has this Punch given you anything?"

Buffie grinned wisely as they drove along, their shotguns firmly held between their knees. "Damn it," he said mildly, "I forgot to bring cigarettes. Let's stop at the Blue Jay Diner for a minute." The cigarette machine at the Blue Jay was out of sight of the parking lot, and so was the phone booth.

It was too bad, he reflected, to have to share everything with the boys, but on the other hand he already had his growth stocks. Anyway there was plenty for everyone. Every nation on Earth had its silicon-drive spaceships now, fleets of them milling about on maneuvers all over the Solar

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System. With help from the star-people, an American expedition had staked out enormous radium beds on Callisto, the Venezuelans had a diamond mountain on Mercury, the Soviets owned a swamp of purest penicillin near the South Pole of Venus. And individuals had done very well, too. A ticket-taker at Steeplechase Park explained to the aliens why the air jets blew up ladies' skirts, and they tipped him with a design for a springless safety pin that was earning him a million dollars a month in royalties. An usherette at La Scala became the cosmetic queen of Europe for showing three of them to their seats. They gave her a simple painless eye dye, and now ninety-nine percent of Milan's women had bright blue eyes from her salon.

All they wanted to do was help. They said they came from a planet very far away and they were lonely and they wanted to help us make the jump into space. It would be fun, they promised, and would help to end poverty and war between nations, and they would have company in the void between the stars. Politely and deferentially they gave away secrets worth trillions, and humanity burst with a shower of gold into the age of plenty.

Punch was there before them, inspecting the case of bourbon hidden in their blind. "I am delighted to meet you, Chuck, Jer, Bud, Padre and of course Buffie," he said. "It is kind of you to take a stranger along on your fun. I regret I have only some eleven minutes to stay."

Eleven minutes! The boys scowled apprehensively at Buffie. Punch said, in his wistful voice, "If you will allow me to give you a memento, perhaps you would like to know that three grams of common table salt in a quart of Crisco, exposed for nine minutes to the radiations from one of our silicon reactors, will infallibly remove warts." They all scribbled, silently planning a partnership corporation, and Punch pointed out to the bay where some tiny dots rose and fell with the waves. "Are those not the mallards you wish to shoot?"

"That's right," said Buffie glumly. "Say, you know what I was thinking? I was thinking—that transmutation you mentioned before—I wonder—"

"And are these the weapons with which you kill the birds?" He examined Padre's ancient over-and-under with the silver chasing. "Extremely lovely," he said. "Will you shoot?"

"Oh, not *now*," said Buffie, scandalized. "We can't do that. About that transmutation—"

"It is extremely fascinating," said the starman, looking at them with his mild pink pupils and returning the gun. "Well, I may tell you, I think, what we have not an-

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nounced. A surprise. We are soon to be present in the flesh, or near, at any rate."

"Near?" Buffie looked at the boys and the boys looked at him; there had been no suggestion of this in the papers and it almost took their minds off the fact that Punch was leaving. He nodded violently, like the flickering of a bad fluorescent lamp.

"Near indeed, in a relative way," he said. "Perhaps some hundreds of millions of miles. My true body, of which this is only a projection, is at present in one of our own interstellar ships now approaching the orbit of Pluto. The American fleet, together with those of Chile, New Zealand and Costa Rica, is there practicing with its silicon-ray weapons and we will shortly make contact with them for the first time in a physical way." He beamed. "But only six minutes remain," he said sadly.

"That transmutation secret you mentioned—" Buffie began.

"Please," said Punch, "may I not watch you hunt? It is a link between us."

"Oh, do you shoot?" asked Padre.

The star-man said modestly, "We have little game. But we love it. Won't you show me your ways?"

Buffie scowled. He could not help thinking that twelve growth stocks and a wart cure were small pickings from the star-men, who had given wealth, weapons and the secret of interstellar travel. "We can't," he growled, his voice harsher than he intended. "We don't shoot sitting birds."

Punch gasped with delight. "Another bond between us! But now I must go to our fleet for the . . . For the surprise." He began to shimmer like a candle.

"Neither do we," he said, and went out.

POST-FIXING IT UP

As I rather drearily suspected, I had some arithmetical errors in my article PRE-FIXING IT UP (F & SF, November 1962). I didn't think they would be so glaring, however. Mr. C. D. Root of Transitron Electronic Corp. right here in the Greater Boston area wrote to tell me that I was off by one order of magnitude (one shift of the decimal point) in the distance covered by light at short time intervals. Light will actually travel about 327 yards in a microsecond, about 1 foot in a nanosecond and about 1/100 inch in a picosecond. My own figures were too small by a factor of ten. I should have realized this, too, for the nanosecond is sometimes called a "light-foot" because it is the time in which light travels a foot and I knew that—and yet nothing clicked. Alas! The Gentle Readers, by the way, seem to think that the prefix "pico" comes from the Italian "piccolo" meaning "small." Well, perhaps. —Isaac Asimov

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The sylph-slender pedant—er, pedagogue—who functions as our Contributing Science Editor informs us that he took this test himself. At last report he was still disgustingly hale, so there would appear to be no risks attached—save, possibly, those to the ego; against which our C.S.E., in his usual cavalier fashion, provides no guarantees whatsoever.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR ELEMENTS?

by Joseph C. Stacey

LISTED BELOW (JUMBLED FASHION) ARE THE NAMES OF ELEVEN metallic and non-metallic chemical elements, together with a brief interesting fact concerning each. Can you match up at least 7 of them correctly for a passing score? 8-9 is good; 10-11 excellent. Check your answers on page 126.

1. SILVER	7 (a) *only non-metallic element liquid at ordinary temperatures*
2. HELIUM	6 (b) *the lightest known metal*
3. OSMIUM	10 (c) *first element to have been made synthetically before it was found in nature*
4. IRON	1 (d) *best known conductor of heat and electricity*
5. TUNGSTEN	9 (e) *the lightest element*

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6. LITHIUM	11	(f) *the first of two new radioactive elements discovered by Marie and Pierre Curie (the other being radium)*
7. BROMINE	4	(g) *most magnetic metallic element*
8. CESIUM	2	(h) *discovered in the sun's atmosphere by means of the spectroscope before it was found in the earth's atmosphere*
9. HYDROGEN	5	(i) *has the highest melting point (3370 degrees Centigrade) of all known metals*
10. TECHNETIUM	1	(j) *first metal discovered by means of spectroscope (by Bunsen and Kirchhoff, in 1860)*
11. POLONIUM	3	(k) *densest of all elements*

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Hot on the trail of Mack Reynolds, our Mr. Pettifogle arrived in Timbuctu—only to find that Mr. Reynolds had departed with the annual salt caravan for Ouagadougou. P. pursued him in all haste, mounted on a spavined dromedary, all the mount available; alas, from Ouagadougou the ubiquitous Mr. R. had flown to Katmandu—or was it Martaban? Hence little or no data of a bio-or bibliographical nature is immediately available on the ubiquitous Mack Reynolds, the traveller's traveller, whose fascinating articles on foreign parts and the ways thither ornament so many magazines. Besides being a modern-day Burton or Halliburton, he is a Science Fiction writer of repute (RUSSKIES GO HOME F&SF, Nov., 1960). In Speakeasy *he examines the ever-fruitful theme of* If This Goes On—*"This", in this case, being the concurrent marches of technology and the fear of being "controversial." And that eternal vigilance is still, as it always was and will be, the price of Liberty.*

SPEAKEASY

by Mack Reynolds

When four sit down to conspire, three are police spies and the other a fool.

OLD EUROPEAN PROVERB

"My dear boy," William Morris said, bending his knees to adjust to the acceleration of the elevator, "I'm sure I have no need to warn you to, ah . . . well, not express any of your father's less popular opinions this afternoon." He cleared his throat apologetically. "That is, of course . . ." He let the sentence dribble away.

Rex laughed reassuringly. "Great Scott, Uncle Bill, stop worrying about me. Taos isn't as wild and wooly as you seem to think. And Dad doesn't exactly go about making anti-Technate speaches from soapboxes, for that matter."

"Well," his uncle said, "I should

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hope not." The older man cast his eyes quickly about the elevator compartment. "I do wish you wouldn't say things like that, my boy."

"Say what? All that I said was that Dad didn't make a practice of saying things against the government."

His uncle was worried. "Yes, but flippantly. It's easy enough to get into a habit of speaking quickly, flippantly and . . . well, before you know it you've actually allowed your subconscious to . . ." He stopped and cleared his throat.

Rex Morris was pushing thirty, pushing five ten, pushing one sixty. But he looked as though thus far life itself hadn't pushed him very hard. He grinned at the older man now.

Uncle Bill was unhappy with him. "You know what I mean," he said severely. "Here we are, Lizzy Mihm's floor."

"Who is she again? I've met so many people these last few days, that I lose track."

"Well, you ought to remember Elizabeth Mihm. Her husband used to be Prime Technician of the Transport Functional Sequence. Good friend of mine. Since he passed on, Lizzy has devoted a good deal of her time to entertaining. Her apartment is quite a center, quite a place for you to make contacts, my boy. She has the Supreme Technician himself to her soirees, quite often."

They left the elevator and stood before a door. The older man pushed a button at its side and smiled knowledgeably at his nephew. "Swank, eh? An electric button. Lizzy Mihm is famous for her antiques."

Rex Morris was intrigued. "What does it do?"

"It rings a bell inside. Then Lizz knows someone is at the door."

Rex looked at his uncle blankly. "Then what?"

"Then she comes to the door to see who it is."

"But, look, why not just . . ."

His uncle said impatiently, "It's an antique, don't you understand? I don't imagine a half dozen people in the whole city have them."

Rex Morris muttered something to that, but the door was opening.

"Why, *William,*" Lizzy Mihm gushed. "And your *dear,* sweet nephew from the *wild,* West."

Rex Morris winced.

"*Do* come in," she fluttered, sweeping a hefty and heavily bejeweled arm in the direction of the sounds of her party. She was a middle aged biddy, not more than five foot two and going to weight by the minute.

"Of course, you remember Rex," William Morris said, giving his hostess a peck on the cheek in the way of greeting.

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"Why, of *course,* and there are some dear, dear people I want him to meet this afternoon. Including," she added archly, "a dear, *dear* young lady." She laid a beefy hand on Rex Morris' arm as they filed into the inner rooms.

"Now Rex, I may call you Rex, of course . . ."

"Of course, Techna Mihm."

She giggled, "Actually, everyone calls me Elizabeth, so you may too. But just a word before I take you around. Now everybody, *everybody* has a wonderful time at my affairs. Oh, *wonderful.* Just remember, of course, that we don't discuss religion or politics, or anything controversial, and, of course, nothing has ever been said in my home against the government."

"Why, certainly not," Rex said.

She patted his arm. "Ummm," she said approvingly. "I remember your father when he was a young man. I see you have retained only his better qualities."

There didn't seem to be any answer to that. Lizzy Mihm swept him up to a group of ladies who were currently listening to the complaints of a breathless member of their gathering, obviously expressing strong opinions on a matter of importance.

"Butter," she was saying, "my dears. I simply don't know what I'll do about the servant problem. Real butter, mind you, for greasing herself, and there's no breaking her of it. She's one of the old old family robos, one of the very early models that I've had all my life and my mother before me. So what can you do? You can't have her reconditioned. But she uses *butter.* Heavens knows how my grandparents could have afforded it, I know I can't. Butter, three thousand erg units a pound, I mean."

"Servants!" one of the other ladies said, casting her eyes ceilingward.

Somewhere along the route of introductions, Rex Morris acquired a drink. He met this individual, that individual, was introduced sweepingly to this whole group, that whole group. He retained possibly one name out of ten.

Lizzy Mihm finally stopped, to reorganize. She took up a glass of wine from one of the autobars and sipped it. "Too cold," she said, frowning. "Servants!" she added absently, as her eyes darted about her apartment, hostess-like. "I wonder if things were better before, when there were human servants."

Rex lifted his eyebrows. "My dear Techna Mihm."

Her eyes shot to his face, widened. "Oh, don't misunderstand. I wasn't criticizing the government. The Service Functional Sequence was antiquated and was due for discontinuation."

"I don't know anything about

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it," Rex Morris said primly.

"Of course not, neither do I."

"Who is that very attractive woman over there?" Rex said, obviously changing the subject. They were dangerously close to the controversial. "The one talking to the big Security official."

"Over there with Technician Matt Edgeworth? Oh, Nadine," Lizzy Mihm said. "Didn't I introduce you to Techna Nadine Sims?"

"I don't think so," Rex said. "I certainly would have remembered. Is she the dear, dear young lady you mentioned?"

"Well, no," Lizzy Mihm said. There was an uncomfortable element in her voice. "To tell you the *truth,* I understand Nadine is, well, said to be connected with the SFS."

"Oh," Rex said. "How nice."

Lizzy Mihm said hurriedly, "Now, Rex, you know your uncle is an old, *old* friend of mine, and, of course, I knew your father too, before he huffed off out there to wherever it is he . . ."

"Taos," Rex said, still eying the girl across the room. She was a slender, quiet sophisticate, clad simply in a gray sari. The big police official had gone off somewhere now. Rex wondered whether it was her connection with the Security FS that accounted for the absence of the admirers that should have been banked three or four deep in her vicinity.

"Yes, of course," his hostess was saying. "What I mean is, Rex, I have your interests very, *very* deeply at heart. William tells me that you've finished your studies and are seeking an appointment in a suitable functional sequence. And, well, we do want you to make the *right* contacts."

Rex looked down at her, amused. "You mean Techna Sims isn't to be considered a good contact?"

She tapped his arm with a hefty hand. "Now, you stop Rex Morris, I know you're joshing me. Isn't that a wonderful word? Absolutely antique. I was *only* reminding you that you're a newcomer to the capital and it's even more necessary than usual not to be considered, well, interested in controversial matters. And Nadine *might* be . . . well, you know. But do come along, I can see you're intrigued now."

Nadine Sims gave him an overly ready smile. "I was wondering when we'd be introduced," she said. "Our celebrities come few and far between these days."

"Celebrities?" Rex Morris said.

"The son of Leonard Morris makes interesting meeting," she said.

Lizzy Mihm fluttered, "Now, I'll just leave you young people and check on things. I do believe I heard the doorbell." She bustled off.

"Quite an old girl," Rex said,

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looking for something to say.

"The capital's most successful hostess," Nadine said. "I hear you're in town for good."

He grinned at her. "That sounds like a terrible thing to say about any thirty year old bachelor."

She frowned. "I beg your pardon."

He did a mock leer. "Far from being in town for good, I'm wide open to any suggestions about what the capital offers in the way of bad."

She laughed at him. "I'll have to offer my guide services. What I meant was, you're in town permanently."

"Only if I can find an appointment that seems promising."

"I think I'd enjoy another Süsskratzer," she said, strolling toward the nearest autobar, as they talked. "Is your specialty the same as your father's?"

He dialed her a glass of the sparkling wine and grimaced. "That's the difficulty. I'm incurably lazy. I haven't specialized in anything." He handed her the chilled glass.

She raised her eyebrows. "You shock me. What is the Techno class coming to?"

Rex Morris shrugged, dialed himself a Tequila Cooler. "Too much trouble. And, besides, all it gets you is difficulty. Look at my dad, the scientist who conquered the virus diseases. But is that what he is primarily known for? Of course not. His fame is based on his refusal to conform and . . ."

"Techno *Morris*," she said gently. "I don't believe we really know each other this well, do we?"

He was immediately repentive. "Sorry."

She gave him her ready smile. "I know what you mean. And I see your position. And with your connections, what need is there to specialize?"

Before they could develop that further, the hulking Security Technician Matt Edgeworth who she'd been talking to earlier came up and swept Nadine Sims away toward a room that had been cleared for dancing. She looked back over her shoulder at him, grimaced hopelessly as though she would rather have remained.

Rex pursed his lips in a silent appreciative whistle as he looked after her.

A voice at his elbow said in a drawn out way, "V-e-r-y bad, my dear boy."

Rex turned to his uncle. "What?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all, Rex. How're you enjoying yourself?"

"Fine. Lot of nice people, Uncle Bill."

"How do you like, ah, Techna Sims?"

"Pretty girl, all right."

"That she is. Ah, well . . . I un-

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derstand she sometimes does chores for . . ." he hesitated.

"For the Security FS," Rex finished for him. "So they tell me."

His uncle cleared his throat. "Want you to meet some other friends of mine, my dear boy. Technician Marrison over here is a mucky-muck in the Textile FS. Always looking for new blood, you know."

Technician Marrison, a chubby, red nosed executive type, was in the midst of what he evidently considered a hilarious affair when they came up.

". . . and then we switched to Hawaiians," he related. "Four parts gin, two orange juice, one curacao. Served in a hollowed out pineapple, you know. By this time we were all kinked. Absolutely kinked. You should've seen Jeff. Jeff was kinked. And Martha . . ."

"Martha?" someone interrupted. "Not Martha. Martha has a capacity like a camel. I've never seen . . ."

"Kinked," Technician Marrison insisted happily. "And then we all took off for the Flop House, carrying these pineapples, understand. Really hilarious. Each of us had a pineapple in each hand."

"Is that where the SFS effective stopped you?" somebody else laughed.

"Did we tell *him,* where to head in," Marrison chuckled. "Imagine, there we were, two Prime Technicians and three Technicians and this numbskull tries to pull *his* authority on us.'

Everyone laughed.

Uncle Bill interrupted to say, "Fred, I wanted to introduce my nephew. This is Rex. Rex, Fredrick Morrison is Technician of the Textile Functional Sequence for the whole eastern seaboard."

Marrison visably puffed. He shook hands condescendingly. "Your nephew?" he said to William Morris. And then, less jovially, "Not the son of your brother Leonard?"

Rex nodded. "Leonard Morris is my father."

Marrison made a moue. "Well, I admire your father's researches into the viruses, of course, however, I could never appreciate his . . ."

Lizzy Mihm had swept up. "Gentlemen, gentlemen," she twittered, "we're not arguing anything over here, are we? Rex, you come along. I want you to meet a dear, *dear* friend of mine."

In view of the fact that his uncle could probably speak his case more effectively than he, Rex Morris let himself be led off, after some routine banality to the textile potentate.

In fact, his head was still turned back to the last group, when Lizzy Mihm said, ". . . Paula Klein. Paula, this is that nice, *nice* boy I told you about. Rex Morris from, how do you say it, Touse?"

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"Taos," Rex said, "rhymes with house, or mouse, or . . . well, hello."

Paula Klein frowned at him. He got the vague feeling that in this beautiful young lady's life, meeting someone in her own age bracket could be considered a waste of valuable time. She must have been in her mid-twenties, he decided, but she had the serious, sincere air of the sophmore on ideals bent.

". . . her mother," Lizzy Mihm was saying, "one of my *dearest* friends." She patted Rex on the arm with one beefy hand, Paula with the other. "Now you two get to know each other." She added archly, "But mind yourselves. I'm afraid Rex's father has an unfortunate reputation for discussing politics, and, of course, Paula's grandfather and his religion . . ." She giggled to indicate how bold she was being and swept off.

Rex Morris pulled his thinking away from Paula's physical attributes, which were excellent, and said, "Grandfather's religion?"

Paula Klein said expressionlessly, "I believe Lizzy rather insists on no politics or religion, no sex, no criticism of current institutions, no race or any other controversial subjects, and, *above all . . .*"

Rex chimed in with her and together they chanted, *"No criticism of the government."*

They both laughed, but then both cast their eyes quickly about their vicinity. None seemed close enough to have evesdropped.

"Drink?" Rex said.

"No thanks, I don't drink."

He looked at her. "These days? What do you do with your time?"

Her eyes went over him, musingly, "By your appearance, you don't look as though you do too much bottle belting yourself, Techno . . ."

"Morris. Rex Morris."

"And you're from Taos? Good Howard, I wasn't listening I'm afraid when Lizzy introduced us. You must be the son of . . ."

He chimed in with her again and together they chanted, *"Leonard Morris."*

Rex said, "I'm beginning to get tired of being my father's son."

She had new interest in her face and in her voice. "No you're not," she said.

"No, I suppose not, really."

Paula Klein said, her voice little more than a whisper. "The question you asked. My grandfather was one of the very last to hold out against the religious amalgamations of the Temple."

"I see," Rex said uncomfortably.

She said, "He practiced one of the old religions until the last, although they demoted him to a common engineer." She added, her voice musing, "It takes time in

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our society today to live such a matter down."

Rex said uncomfortably, "I'm afraid it would be embarrassing if someone heard us, Techna Klein."

She looked at him strangely for a moment but then shook her head. "Look," she said, "how would you like to get out of here—and talk?"

He grinned, "Best proposition I've had all day."

"Follow me, I know this apartment of Lizzy's. There's a back way."

Rex Morris mentally shrugged. This cocktail party, like a dozen others he'd already attended under his uncle's wing, wasn't particularly significant. Uncle Bill was pulling the right strings, using his contacts to the best advantage. Some of the top heirarchy of the functional sequences and the Temple were here today, but Rex's appearance on the scene was not particularly necessary.

The service elevator lowered them at sickening speed to two levels below ground. They issued into one of the building's servoterms and Paula, who obviously knew her way around, stepped over to a Transport FS box and dialed for a two passenger aircushion car.

In the way of conversation she said, "I imagine that in your part of the Technate there are still quite a few privately owned cars."

"Not as many as you'd think," Rex told her, as they waited. "Taos has an adequate Transport FS garage. Of course, our house is about eight miles out of town so it takes a time for delivery. But the trouble with owning your own is you're so limited. Using the TFS garage services means you can use a fast sports model one day, an eight passenger limousine the next, a pick-up truck the following day, a four passenger sedan another time."

"Of course," Paula said. "My grandfather remembered when cars were commonly privately owned—except for taxis and rent-a-car services which were in their infancy then. He said the streets were so filled that you couldn't find a place to park. Here we are." A robo controlled aircushion two seater had made its way down a ramp and now approached them.

"I'll drive, if you don't mind," Paula said.

"Look," Rex asked her, "where are we going?"

"You'll see," she chuckled. "My invitation was that we go someplace—and talk." They entered the city's traffic at one of the lower levels and Paula set the dials.

Ten minutes later brought them to their destination, wherever it was. Not that Rex Morris would have had much of a time finding the place again. It was one of the less swank theatrical

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and nightclub-restaurant-bar centers.

Paula dismissed the car, led the way down a narrowish side street.

Rex Morris looked about him. "This must be one of the older streets in the city."

"I suppose so."

"Look, confound it, where are we going?"

She grinned at him. The first time he'd seen her smile, really. "You'll see, mister-son-of-Leonard-Morris."

He groaned.

They entered an averagely nondescript building that Rex first decided was an effective class apartment house but which immediately obviously wasn't. They walked along a corridor for a few yards and then took what seemed to be a service elevator. Two levels down they emerged into a small furnitureless room, and Paula stood before a tell-screen.

A voice said, "We recognize you, Techna Klein, but who is the stranger?"

"I vouch for him," Paula said impatiently.

Rex Morris felt a stir of nervousness. Where was this leading? He didn't like it. He'd had no idea . . .

The voice was saying, "Obviously, or you wouldn't have brought him. However, Paula Klein, you know the rules of this establishment."

She said impatiently, "I tell you, he's perfectly safe."

"But how do we know? I am sorry, sir, this is a private establishment and . . ."

Paula snapped, "This is Techno Rex Morris, son of Hero of the Technate Leonard Morris. Now is that enough for you?"

There was a long moment of silence.

The voice said, "Welcome to this speakeasy, Techno Morris."

Paula snorted and led the way to where a door was sliding open.

"Speakeasy!" Rex blurted.

She turned her head to him and her grin was mischievous. "I told you—someplace where we can talk."

"Great Scott," Rex muttered.

Inside, there must have been half a dozen rooms. Each of them, in turn, held half a dozen round tables. Rex Morris was reminded, vaguely, of a poker table, only these were larger. Each table would comfortably seat a dozen or so. Some, however, had twice that number, seated or standing about it. Each table had at its center an autobar and possibly half of the club's attenders were sipping away at coffee or other beverages.

But drinking was obviously not the attraction.

"Come over here," Paula said to him. And then, under her breath. "There is only one fast rule. You're not to take exception

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to what anyone says—no matter how extreme. You're allowed to say anything you wish, but so is everyone else."

Rex Morris cleared his throat. "See here, I'd rather you wouldn't introduce me by name."

She looked at him oddly. "All right, but you can trust these people. They're in the same boat as you are. I gave your name out there just so we could get in. From now on, you'd have no trouble if you ever wanted to return on your own."

They had come up to a table, largely occupied by more elderly conversationalists. Most of these remained quiet, listening, possibly puffing on pipe or cigarette, or sipping coffee or beer. Just at present one was holding forth pronouncedly. He was a thin, sharply incisive senior effective.

"My question is *why,*" he was saying. "Why, why—*why*? And nobody answers it. On the lower levels of religious belief we descend to the ridiculous. The argument gives us a supreme being, or beings, who create universe and man, and then spend considerable time supervising him and usually making demands in the way of worship. If individual man is 'good', upon death he is rewarded throughout all eternity; if he is 'bad' he is punished throughout all eternity. An obviously childish conception and originally born in primitive minds. On top of it all what is good and what is bad is usually arbitrarily decided upon by a priesthood." The speaker's voice went dry. "And often indeed their decisions on what is sin, or what is righteous, are strongly influenced by their own material advantage."

One of his audience grunted.

The speaker turned to him. "Seldom does one find, throughout history, an organized religion's priesthood which has not managed to control considerable wealth. There are exceptions, but they are only exceptions, the rule stands."

Another of the table's occupants said, "I think you're drifting away from your original point."

"No I'm not. My question, which I ask of the religious, is *why*? On this lower level of personal gods the situation is most obvious. God creates man, sets him some rather impossible regulations, and then punishes or rewards him according to how he reacts. But *why*? Why should a god go to such bother? The question is the same, however, on any level of religious thought. If there is a supreme being directing all this, what motivates him? To what end does he create such a foolish, pathetic creature as man?"

One of the older men took his pipe from his mouth and said softly, "The fact that we cannot answer your question doesn't mean there is no answer. Perhaps

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to the Diety the answer is a very obvious one."

Rex drew Paula Klein back a few yards from the table. His lips were dry. "Look here," he whispered. "If the Temple knew about this conversation, those men would lose status. They might even be exiled from the Technate. Or . . . or even . . ."

"Be imprisoned or meet violence," Paula finished for him.

"Yes, that's what I mean," he said urgently.

"Well?" she said.

"I think we ought to get out of here."

She laughed softly. "I'm afraid the example your father set—among others—has swept the more intelligent citizens of our society. This isn't the only speakeasy in this city. And every city has its quota."

"But what's the point? Sooner or later the Temple is going to crack down on these men."

"It's not just the Temple. What controversial subjects, in particular, are you interested in?"

"Me? Why, I . . ."

"Come over here. If I know this chap, there at the table in the corner, you'll get a laugh."

"Motherhood," a heavy-set, pale complexioned junior effective was sneering. "What is there about a mother that automatically makes her a subject of adoration? Take a sloppy- half-baked, under-educated, mealy mouthed, objectionable kid of eighteen and let her be caught with her prophylactic equipment malfunctioning. Nine months later and miracle, she's a veritable shrine at which to worship. She's a *mother!* Say anything against motherhood and the mob is screaming for your blood. Not that I hold any brief for fathers either. In my estimation not one person in a hundred who becomes a parent is capable of raising the nation's young. They muddle through, untrained, incapable, being the product of the same sort of parents themselves. How we do as well as we seem to is a mystery to me." He snorted his disgust and lapsed into temporary silence.

Paula said slyly, "Don't you love your own mother, Effective?"

He looked up at her and snorted again. "I *love* her, perhaps, but I also realize her short comings. God! how she suffers. What a martyr. How she has sacrified through the years for her children. How cruel they all are, not to realize and appreciate her. A typical example!"

Rex shook his head. "What's over here?" he said, nodding at a table that was not only full, but had several standees around its perimeter of chairs.

"I wouldn't know," Paula said, "the idea is just to drift around until you hear something of interest. Then you listen or join in, if you wish."

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A minor debate was evidently underway, instead of a monologue.

One participant was saying doggedly, "I'm not narrow minded. I have no desire to burn homosexuals at the stake. If their . . . tastes . . . are different than mine, it's their own business." He leaned forward and pointed a finger at a younger man across the table from him. "However, I think they should stick to themselves. I don't approve of their seducing young people who otherwise would remain normal."

"What do you mean by normal?" the other said in disgust.

"You know what I mean. The basic reason for the sex act is to procreate. When you start interfering with that end product, you begin striking at the race. When an homosexual leads an otherwise normal young man or woman into his or her own path, he interfers with that person having children and replenishing the earth, as the expression goes."

"That's ridiculous," the other said. "Did Kinsey live for nothing? It's well known that practically everybody has a touch of the homosexual in him. The race isn't in danger simply because . . ."

Red lights were flashing on the wall, and the room went momentarily still.

The last speaker groaned, "A raid! And me on probation from the last time I was caught."

Paula's eyes were darting about the room. Already the speakeasy's membership was on its feet, milling about undecidedly. There was a sound of pounding in the distance, a door was evidently being forced.

"Great Scott," Rex blurted. "We're caught. I'll never get a decent appointment now."

Paula looked at him strangely for a moment, then, "Look, follow me. Here, come through here."

He followed her through several rooms, back through a door into a small corridor beyond. Into a tiny office.

Behind the desk was seated a middle aged, red face man in the dress of a senior effective. His expression registered disgust now. "A raid," he said bitterly. "The second one this month. What's wrong with the SFS, their Technician trying to get a promotion? Hello, Paula." He looked at Rex. "Who's this?"

Paula said urgently, "Mike this is Leonard Morris' son. He's newly in town. You're right about Technician Edgeworth, he's bucking for Prime Technician. If he catches Rex in a speakeasy, he might throw the book at him. You know that. Besides, Rex isn't affiliated with a functional sequence as yet. He'd have nobody to go to bat for him if he gets into the Technacourt. Mike, you've got to do something."

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Mike was a man of quick decision. He was on his feet.

"All right, through here. You're on the vulnerable side yourself, Paula."

He pulled open the door of a clothes closet.

"I've only used this two or three times. Possibly the police know about it. I don't think so. I don't even use it myself. It's for *real* emergencies. Good luck, Techno Morris."

Rex muttered back. "Thanks . . . Mike."

"Oh hurry, Good Howard!" Paula said.

There was a pounding of footsteps in the corridor.

She had pushed aside two or three coats to reveal a small door beyond, so set within the wall as to escape easy notice. She pressed against it and it fell away inward, even as Mike closed the closet door behind them.

It was dark.

"A lighter?" she whispered.

He flicked his lighter, and by it they made their way down the ultra-narrow passage. It debouched through a seemingly normal door into a corridor beyond. The door stopped being normal when, evidently on a tight spring, it clicked shut behind them. Rex tried the knob, but it was now tightly locked.

They were in a small hotel, obviously of senior effective and below ranking.

"Let's hurry," Paula said breathlessly.

In the street beyond were half a dozen or so SFS effectives under the orders of another of the security police of engineer rank. They were obviously guarding the entrance to the speakeasy while other members of their force were conducting the raid inside. Four or five of their vehicles, of various size, were parked strategically around. Pedestrians went by with eyes directly to the front, ignoring completely that something out of the ordinary was going on.

Paula Klein and Rex Morris joined them, as inconspicuously as possible, and strolled past the SFS men.

However, the Engineer in command blinked suddenly, blurted something to his men and the whole contingent snapped to rigid attention. Paula nodded to them, and continued on the way.

A hundred feet down the street, Rex said, "What in the world was all that?"

Paula was biting her lip. She said, "That fool saw me come out of the hotel with you."

"What of it? But what I want to know, what was that salute bit?"

Paula said impatiently, "Klein, Klein. Don't you recognize my name?"

Rex came to a halt and stared at her. "You mean that Warren

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Klein's your husband? The Prime Technician of the Security Functional Sequence?"

"Not my husband, my brother. Good Howard, he'll be furious."

In the morning, at breakfast, William Morris was slyly inquisitive. "We seem to, ah, have lost one another at Lizzy's party."

Rex was dialing turtle eggs and sea pork, toast, butter and coffee. "Uh huh, I went off with Paula Klein."

His uncle pursed his lips. "Paula, eh? Nice girl. However, well . . ."

"However, what?" Rex frowned at him.

"Well, frankly, quite a madcap, so I understand. She's quite her brother's, ah, despair. You seem to have a tendency for ladies connected with the Security FS, Rex. Do you think that ah . . . well . . ." he let his sentence go unfinished.

Rex Morris poked at his food. "Whale butter," he said. "Do you know, Dad raises real butter on our place near Taos."

"Real butter? Oh, come now. Not even the Prime Technicians serve real butter at their tables. I ate with one only last week. You mean *cow* butter? Has he connections with a zoo? Oh, now really, my dear boy."

"Goat," Rex said. "Dad's big joke these days is telling people he's the last of the ranchers. He has a milch goat, one of the last three or four in the area. Makes quite a hobby out of her."

"How antique," his uncle said, wide eyed. "I must tell Lizzy Mihm about it. She'll be green."

The robo said from the wall speaker, "Engineer Lance Fredrics of the Security Functional Sequence at the disposal of Technician William Morris and Techno Rex Morris."

William Morris' eyebrows rose. "Security? What in the world would a Security Engineer want with me?"

Rex said nervously, "Oh, oh."

The older man's eyes went to him.

Rex put down his fork, looked his embarrassment at his older companion. "I'm afraid I've pulled a boner, Uncle Bill. I hope it doesn't jeopardize your position."

"Position? Don't be ridiculous, I'm retired. What are you talking about?"

"I went to a speakeasy yesterday. There was a raid. I thought I got out, undetected, but evidently not. How bad I spot am I in?"

"A speakeasy! Not in town a week and you've already located yourself a speakeasy?"

"I was taken to one. I've heard about such places before but I've never seen one. We don't have them out in the country."

William Morris cast his eyes upward. "Well, let's have the officer in, and explain it all. How-

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ever, I would think, Rex, that in view of your father's, ah, notoriety, that you'd be more circumspect."

"Sorry, Uncle Bill."

His uncle raised his voice. "Show Engineer Fredrics in."

"Carried out," the robo's voice said.

The door opened and a blank faced, stockily built Security FS uniformed engineer entered. He stopped two feet within the doorway, clicked his heels and snapped, "Respects to Technician Morris."

"Oh, relax, relax," William Morris muttered. "Sit down, Fredrics. Would you like coffee? It's genuine coffee, from the South American Technate."

Engineer Fredrics was taken aback. "Genuine coffee?"

William Morris chuckled. "Well, from the Brazilian hydroponics tanks. You'll appreciate the fact that rank has its privileges, Fredrics. Ah, particularly after you secure your own appointment to Technician, eh?"

The Security man took a chair selfconsciously. He cleared his throat and said, "Yes, sir. Thank you. Uh, actually, it's Techno Morris I've been assigned to see."

The older man chuckled as he dialed the coffee. "So I understand. My nephew was just telling me, he was inadvertently taken to a speakeasy, yesterday."

"Well, yes."

"Inadvertently," William Morris chuckled again. "Utter foolishness. I've already spoken to him about it."

Engineer Fredrics was embarrassed. "Well, sir, my orders are . . ."

William Morris raised a hand and waved it in negation. "Don't bother, young man. I'll get in touch with your Technician and clear this all up."

Rex Morris spoke for the first time. "Uncle Bill, I don't want to hide behind you on this. I made a mistake and I'm willing to face up to it."

"Let me handle this, Rex. You're too new in town to be getting a bad name for yourself. It might jeopardize your receiving a suitable appointment." Uncle Bill turned to the security officer. "I suppose Edgeworth is your superior. I'll phone him right after breakfast."

Fredrics squirmed in his chair, sorry now that he hadn't been able to resist the invitation to coffee. It's difficult to deal in an official capacity with someone whose hospitality you are accepting. He said, "Sir, my orders are to bring Techno Morris into headquarters."

"Indeed?" William Morris said coldly. "Perhaps you'd better have your Technician phone *me,* Engineer Fredrics. I am not at all sure I appreciate this cavalier treatment of my guest and relative."

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The SFS man was on his feet again, his face flushed.

"Sir, Technician Edgeworth has been conducting a crackdown on speakeasies. The statistics show they've more than doubled in the past year. The Technician was indignant this morning when he heard that Techno Morris, hardly in town more than a few days, was already seen in one."

"I told you, my nephew was taken to this place without his knowledge. It was not his fault."

"Taken by whom?" The security officer was standing firm.

Rex blurted, "I don't mind telling you that. I object to these places and don't mind cooperating at all. I was taken by Techna Paula Klein."

"Rex . . . !" his uncle said.

"Paula Klein!" the officer said blankly.

There was a long moment of uncomfortable silence. Finally Engineer Lance Fredrics clicked his heels again. "I'll report to my superior. Technician Morris, my respects. May I have permission to leave?"

"Certainly."

Before turning to make his retreat, the Security officer shot a quick glance at Rex Morris. There was a faint contempt in it.

When he was gone, William Morris said uncomfortably, "Did you think that was necessary, my boy? Paula is a bit on the wayward side, but she's a fine girl."

Rex shurgged and buttered another piece of toast. "What difference will it make to her, with her brother Prime Technician of Security? Everything will take care of itself. This nosy Technician Edgeworth wouldn't dare involve a member of his superior's family in a scandal."

"Perhaps," his uncle said, still uncomfortable.

Rex said, "See here, how did they know I was at that speakeasy? We escaped."

The older man grunted in disgust. "Those effective class speakeasies are riddled with police. Nothing is said, nothing goes on that isn't reported."

"But then why are they tolerated? Why doesn't this Technician Edgeworth close them all up with one big raid?"

"Probably because a known evil that you can keep track of is better than an unknown one. The Security FS knows that a certain element of the population is going to discuss controversial subjects come what may. It's far better to keep track than to try to suppress completely. When some individual goes too far, becomes downright subversive, he's picked up and dealt with."

Rex shook his head unbelievingly. "Well, all I can say is that I can see where the Technate's best brains, as represented by the Supreme Technician himself and such high ranking officials as you

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Prime Technicians and Technicians might find it necessary to discuss controversial matters but I can't see it being allowed anyone beneath, say, Senior Engineer's rank, at the very lowest."

His uncle grunted. "That's the way it goes, my boy. Everybody seems to think that *he* shouldn't be abridged in his thinking, nor his speech, but that everyone below his rank should."

"Uncle Bill," Rex Morris said, shocked, "you must be joking."

His uncle grunted cynically once again. "However, next time you want to take in a speakeasy, don't go to one of these lower class ones. They exist on all levels my boy, effective, engineer and technician. When the urge hits you, let me know."

The eyes of the younger man widened. "You mean you belong yourself?" He looked quickly about the room.

William Morris chuckled. "No microphones, Rex. Certainly you know that one of the privileges of my rank, even though I'm retired, is that there is no monitoring of my home. You're as free here as in a speakeasy, and considerably safer."

The Technate of North America consisted of an amalgamation of the former Canada, United States, Mexico, the Caribbean Islands and the Central American nations down to and including Panama. Established in the latter part of the twentieth century, it was an internally self-sufficient, collectivized society requiring neither foreign sources of raw materials nor markets for surplus commodities.

The developments of the second industrial revolution in science, in industry, in practically all fields of endeavor, had solved the problems of production of abundance. The government of the Technate solved those of distribution. The lowliest citizen commanded from the cradle to the grave not only the necessities of life, but its luxuries.

The government itself was a self perpetuating heirarchy. Recommendation from below and appointment from above, was the formula.

At the peak was the Supreme Technician, head of the Congress of Prime Technicians and carrying a veto power over its decisions. His office was held for life and upon his demise the Prime Technicians elected from their number a new incumbent of the office.

Such an election was the sole example of the democratic process in the Technate society, for it has been in complete rejection of the democratic principle that the Technate had come to power. Democracy, it had been decided, was inefficient in the modern world. It led to graft, corruption

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and invariably to the power of inept politicians whose efforts were directed at gaining office for the office's sake. Political parties had become a disgrace by the middle of the 20th century, elections a farce; in another generation they had become a dangerous farce.

Ranking head, then, of the Technate was the Supreme Technician who was elected from and by the twenty-five man body of the Congress of Prime Technicians. Upon the death or retirement of a member of this ruling body, a new member was appointed from the ranks of the next lower echelon, the Technicians of the Functional Sequence of the industry the demised Prime Technician had headed.

For each Prime Technician was the titular head of one of the Technate's Functional Sequences such as Transport, Communication, Education, Medicine, Entertainment, Construction—or Security. The work of the Congress of Prime Technicians was to plan the Technate's production and distribution and to coordinate the efforts of the twenty-five different Functional Sequences. It was a planning body, rather than a legislative or judicial one.

Below each Prime Technician was a varying number of Technicians, according to the make-up of the individual Functional Sequence. Obviously they differed somewhat since the Communications Functional Sequence would have other problems than, say, those of the Entertainment Functional Sequence or of Medicine. The Technician was the official in charge of all activity in a given Functional Sequence in a given geographical area. For instance, a Technician might be in complete command of the Entertainment FS for the West Coast, another for the Middle West, another for the area once known as Mexico.

The formula was recommendation from below, appointment from above. When a Prime Technician died or retired, the Technicians under him recommended from their ranks a candidate for the office. The Congress either appointed this candidate or rejected him and called for another recommendation.

And so it went all the way down the line. Below the Technicians were the Senior Engineers, below them the Junior Engineers. Then came the big drop to Senior Effective, Junior Effective and at the bottom of the pyramid, the Effective.

Recommendation from below, appointment from above.

From the first nepotism and favoritism were the rule. When a man is in a position to appoint others to power and privilege he is hard put to ignore his children, his relatives, his friends.

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A new aristocracy arose, a new class in a society that supposedly was classless—there had been societies before that had claimed to be classless. The Technate system differed possibly from class divided society in the past when basically upper classes differed from lower ones in their enjoyment of the material products of their culture, but the Techno class was still an upper one, the Engineers a middle, and the Effective class a lower one. Food, clothing, shelter, medicine, education and entertainment there were for all aplenty—but there are other things than these.

A society whose direction is based on nepotism is apt to be a static society. When one is born to the purple, rather than achieving it through his own superior efforts, he is apt to have small ability for the office. Why strive, when the goal is effortlessly achieved?

Such a society is also apt to be ultra-conservative for no crown is less easy than an undeserved one.

The trend toward conformism had started even before the advent of the Technate. The tendency accelerated under it. Until eventually. . . .

In his room Rex Morris lay back on his couch, his hands behind his head, and stared at the ceiling. He was irritated by the position into which he'd been thrust. His plans were of necessity changed, and he hadn't wanted to change them.

He sat up finally and called, "Tell-screen."

The screen set in the wall on the opposite side of the room lit up and he said, "Techna Nadine Sims."

A voice said, "Carried out."

Rex Morris strolled over to the set and was standing before it when Nadine Sims' face appeared. She raised her eyebrows, smiled her quick smile. "Well, the earnest young man from the West, seeking employment in the big city."

"All work and no play makes Jack a jerk," Rex grinned back. "How about living up to your promise?"

"Promise?" she said. "As I recall I was normally kinked before Lizzy Mihm's party finally dissolved the other day but not so much so that I would have forgotten a promise."

Rex said, "You asked if I was in town for good and I replied I was more interested in what it offered in the way of 'bad' and thereupon you offered your guide services. And that's a promise in my book."

It came back to her and Nadine Sims laughed. "Guilty," she said, "And I always keep a promise."

"Would you be free this evening?"

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"Free as a bird."

"Let's not get controversial. Back home I have four parakeets and they're all caged."

"Fool," she laughed. "About eight? We can have a couple of John Brown's Bodys while I give you a rundown on what the Entertainment FS is offering these days, and then out on the town we can go."

"John Brown's Bodys?" Rex said. "That's a new one for me."

"In the morning," Nadine said, "you feel like you're moldering in your grave. Eight?"

"I'll be there sharp."

He dressed carefully in the garb of an unassigned Techno. He wasn't certain where the evening might take him before it was through but you never knew when the prestige of his rank might be of value. He paused thoughtfully over his luggage, made a quick decision and ran a thumbnail along a seam of a bag. It opened and from the small pocket inside he selected several items which disappeared into his clothes. He pressed the seam together and it knit tight.

In front of the apartment building which housed his uncle, he dialed a single seater at the Transport FS box and stood on the curb whistling softly between his teeth as he waited. The sun was setting, the city darkening except for here and there where lights already winked on. Rex Morris decided that sunsets were wasted on a city —any city.

The single seater whooshed up to the curb and he climbed in and said into the tell-screen, "Coordinates unknown. Home of Techna Nadine Sims."

A voice said, "Carried out," and Rex leaned back and relaxed, watching the streets go by, the pedestrians, the fast moving idiocy of urban life. He'd spent practically all of his life in the area once known as New Mexico. Comparatively, there was still room to breath out there. However, there were other angles and at the age of thirty, education considered complete, a man had to take his stand, make his way, put in ten years of work before being eligible for retirement. He sighed. It wasn't a pleasant prospect, the immediate years before him.

They pulled up before an ultramodern building, evidently one of the most recently constructed, which overlooked the river.

The tell-screen said, "Techna Nadine Sims resides in the penthouse. Carried out."

Rex Morris stepped to the curb, looked up at the building and whistled appreciatively. The residence was as swank as his uncle's building and Uncle Bill held Technician rank, even though retired.

In the lobby there were half a dozen elevators but only one marked for as high as the penthouse. He stepped inside and said,

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"Techno Rex Morris, calling on Techna Nadine Sims."

The elevator tell-screen said, "Carried out," and Rex began to whisk upward, slowly accelerating, reaching a peak of speed, then slowly decelerating.

He stepped out into the reception room of her apartment, and she was advancing upon him, sari-clad again although in more brilliant color this time. He suspected real silk. She had a glass in each hand, one with contents half gone.

"A John Brown's Body," she said. "No rest for the wicked."

"Is it that bad? I thought the Rattlesnakes we drink back home were the end." He took the glass, silently toasted her, took a sip. He let his eyes go round and pretended to cough. "I just felt my arches fall," he said, "What in the world goes into this?"

She led the way back to the living room with its view over the river. One whole wall was transparent. "Absinthe, slivovitz and a tiny bit of kirsh," she told him. "For best results you let it blend together for at least a week."

He snorted, "By that time I'd think it would have bubbled away in chemical reaction."

She found a couch, settled back on it and looked at him over her glass. "And how goes the search for employment?" she asked, and then added mischievously, "Or have you been spending all your time in the speakeasies?"

He stared at her. "How in the world did you know?"

Nadine Sims laughed. "There's a particularly viperish society commentator I can't resist listening to of an afternoon. You have to be in on all the latest to get his innuendoes but he managed to put over the idea that the son of Leonard Morris was evidently following his father's footsteps."

Rex set down his glass with a bang. "Great Scott," he complained. "The old boy's habit of sounding off is going to haunt me the rest of my life."

"I take it you don't approve of your father's, shall we say unconventional beliefs."

He growled his disgust. "So far as I'm concerned he can think what he wants but I wish he'd keep it to himself." He took up his drink again and finished off half its contents. "I've had to put up with discrimination all my life. All I've wanted is to have a good time, like everybody else. But what do I get? Ha! I meet what seems to be a perfectly ordinary girl, and in fifteen minutes she's taken me into a speakeasy. Why? Because I'm Leonard Morris' son."

Nadine laughed at him. "Well, doesn't it have its advantages too? There must be something in being the son of the only living Hero of the Technate. The right schools. The right contacts. Hmmm, something has just occured to me."

She came to her feet and went

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over to the autobar where she dialed two more of their drinks. She brought them back to him, this time settling to the couch next to where he sat.

"What just occured to you? To get another drink?"

"Silly," she said. "No, what I was thinking was that between the fact that your father is a Hero of the Technate and your uncle a Technician, we could probably take in the Flop House or the Techno-Casino."

"Sounds wonderful, but I've never heard of either."

"Oh, the Flop House's quite the place. No one under the rank of Senior Engineer. Real meat you know. Even game from the preserves. Heavenly."

"Just so it isn't a speakeasy," Rex said, moving closer to her. He dipped a hand inconspicuously into his pocket, then put his arm over her shoulders.

Her eyebrows went up and she looked at him quizzically but didn't move. "Not to change the subject over-abruptly," he said, his voice low, "but how many people have told you that you look like Queen Nefretiti?"

"Nefretiti?" she said.

"Her bust is currently in the Louvre in the European Technate," he said. "Egyptian. The most beautiful woman the world has ever seen." With the fingers of the hand he'd dipped into his pocket, he stroked the lobe of her right ear.

Nadine Sims shivered. "Every day I learn something," she said. "Is this the way they operate in the West? Why do you think I look like this Nefretiti woman?"

He said with mock criticism, "I suppose it's the neck and the line of the jaw. Ummm, you have the same jaw."

"And that's what a thirty year old . . ."

Her eyes glazed and she froze in position, her mouth half open, her glass held rigidly in her right hand.

Rex Morris came to his feet. He quickly brushed a residue of brownish powder from the callused finger tips of his right hand, then looked down at her. He passed a hand over her face without result. He put a hand under her left breast, could detect not even her heart beat. With the tip of an index finger he touched one of her eyeballs. No flicker of response.

Without further hesitation, he started for the back areas of her apartment, darting a quick glance at his wrist watch as he went. He found the kitchen, left by its back door. Found the stairway to the rear.

He took it down one flight and then summoned one of the service elevators which he took all the way to the cellers. There was no one there.

Rather than dial a car from this point, he walked up the ramp on his toes, silently. The alley was

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dark before him, but he hesitated before leaving the entranceway to the apartment building. From an inner pocket he brought a pair of what seemed sun glasses, donned them, and then from another pocket brought forth a gadget no larger than a package of cigarettes.

He played the infra-red flashlight about the alleyway, caught a figure lounging in a doorway across from him. Rex Morris sucked in his breath. He hadn't thought he was being followed. Certainly not to the point where there would be a man stationed both before and behind the building.

He withdrew further into the shadows and brought a small hand weapon from a hip pocket. He knelt, took as rock-like a position as he could, using both hands to steady his aim, and pressed the trigger, once, twice. The weapon hissed and across the alleyway the other folded up, crumpled to his knees and then went prone.

Rex Morris slipped the gun into the side pocket of his jacket and sped across to the security agent. He manhandled the SFS man into the doorway in which he'd been standing, propped him in such wise as to appear as though he'd passed out from drink. Still hurriedly he made his way down the alley and to the street, merging in the pedestrian traffic there.

He walked a full block before summoning a car, and then rode it to within two blocks of his destination, using the manual controls. He dismissed it at that point, and strode rapidly the rest of the way. As he entered the building here, he darted another look at his watch.

The elevator took him to the third floor. He used a key and let himself into a small efficiency apartment. No one was present. He went to the sole window that let upon the main street and manually opened it. He wanted no possible record of his voice on the robo-command. He looked out without getting near enough that anyone below could have identified him, even had they been looking.

Down the street approximately 300 yards, a large limousine was drawing up before an official building.

He shot another look at his watch, hurried to a corner and from a bag of golf clubs drew a sporting rifle, complete with telescope sight. As he strode back to the window, he threw the bolt, checking the shell before ramming it home into the breech. High velocity, armor piercing.

At the window he sat on a foot stool bracing one elbow on a knee, rested the rifle barrel on the window ledge. And waited.

The limousine was disgorging its passengers.

The man for whom he was waiting stepped forth and hesitated momentarily while shaking hands with another of the car's occupants.

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He was fully in the crosshairs of the scope.

Rex Morris breathed deeply, then held his breath and slowly squeezed. The silenced gun coughed and a spurt of dust exploded on the granite wall behind the target.

Rex Morris muttered, shot the bolt again, and tried for another.

His target was darting for the building entrance, a dozen security men, weapons in hand, were on the move. Five or six of them crowded around their superior.

Rex Morris grunted, dropped the rifle and hurried for the apartment door. Down the stairs, into the street. He figured it would take them anywhere from fifteen minutes to half an hour to find the window from which the shot had come.

He walked two blocks. At one point he broke the lenses of his infra-red glasses before dropping them into a street waste receptacle. Further on he tossed his flashlight into the rubble of a construction job. He stripped his gloves from his hands and left them, with his pocket dart gun, in another receptacle further on.

He checked his timepiece, dialed a car at a corner Transport FS box and, once again using manual controls, returned to the vicinity of Nadine Sims apartment house. He hustled down the alley, checked the security agent and found him still under the effect of the air dart Rex Morris had used on him earlier.

He returned to the Sims apartment house and to the service elevator which he took to the floor beneath the penthouse. From there the back stairway took him to the Sims kitchen.

He took two full minutes to run cold water over his wrists, to wash his face, to brush his clothes and to catch his wind. Then he returned to the couch at which she sat. He looked a last time at his watch, took up his glass from the cocktail table where he'd sat it earlier and sat next to Nadine, his eyes on her face.

Within three minutes her eyes cleared and she said, ". . . bachelor particularly notices in a woman these days?"

Rex shrugged and took a pull at his drink. "That's me. I'm a neck man. Figures are all very nice, perhaps, but all women have pleasant figures these days, at least all Techno women have. But necks . . .!" he took a deep breath and let a mock swooning expression run over his face.

"You fool," she said.

"About this evening," Rex changed the subject. "What happens after the Flop House?"

She pursed her lips. "Let's see. What does the Entertainment FS have on a Techno level these days? I suppose you have no interest in slumming among the effectives?"

"You're the guide."

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She looked at the dainty bejeweled watch on her wrist. "It's later than I thought. Let's hurry along and we can discuss the balance of the evening at the Flop House. Actually I understand one never knows what will develop there. You'll usually run into some sort of party that spontaneously erupts. And that can lead to anything."

Rex Morris grunted sceptically. "Well, don't introduce me by name. My name has a way of chilling the air."

She looked at him, her face quizzical. "You really have a case of anti-daditis, don't you?"

At the entrance to the Flop House, Rex Morris was impressed. A uniformed attendant opened the door of their car, murmured a polite good evening to them, turned and preceded them to the door of the restaurant which he opened manually.

Inside, Rex said to his companion, "How swank can you get? I didn't know there were still any members of the Service Functional Sequence."

Nadine Sims said, "If I'm not wrong, the servants you'll find here are all members of the Security FS."

"Oh?" He looked surprised. "I'd think even an effective would consider it beneath him."

"These are hardly effectives," Nadine said dryly. "And the principle job is—so I understand—not just opening doors, taking coats and hats, or ushering diners to their tables. But isn't the subject becoming somewhat . . . say, sticky?"

Rex Morris immediately switched to some banality about the decor.

An unctuous faced type approached them, his voice dripping condescension. "I am sorry, but I am afraid this establishment is restricted to . . ."

Nadine Sims said with hauteur, "This is Techno . . ."

The other was shaking his head. "Techno rank is insufficient, I am afraid. The Flop House is reserved for . . ."

Nadine overrode him. ". . . Rex Morris, son of Hero of the Technate Leonard Morris."

The other was already reversing his engines. "Of course, how stupid of me, Techno Morris. Your uncle is with us tonight, will you be at his table?"

Nadine said, "If I know your uncle, Rex, we'd both be kinked before we ever got out of here, and we did want to make it a night, didn't we?"

"Right as rainbows," Rex said, and to the headwaiter, "A table of our own, if you please."

They were given a table pleasantly located near the dance floor. "Heavens to Veblen," Nadine whispered, impressed. "You'll have to admit that your father's name has its advantages."

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Rex Morris looked about the room. At the far side of the dance floor his Uncle Bill was waving to him jovially. The older Morris was seated at a table with half a dozen otehrs, three or four of whom Rex recognized as of Technician rank, including Marrison, the textile bigwig.

Nadine Sims had adjusted her sari to her satisfaction, had ordered a Double Weeping Willow from the waiter, and now let her eyes rove the room. She smiled at half a dozen different parties, nodded here and there.

She said dryly, "You don't seem overpopular with Techna Klein tonight."

"I beg your pardon?"

She said, "Paula Klein, sitting over there with Technician Matt Edgeworth. Didn't I detect a malicious glare?"

Rex Morris sought Paula out, but now she was talking in animation with the hefty SFS Technician seated across from her. The police official, somehow, seemed out of his element in the ultra-swank Techno class restaurant. Of all present, he alone was unpossessed of the aristocratic aura which evolves with long generations of the manor born. His face was on the rugged side, his hair even just slightly unkempt, his gestures not so suave as his fellow Technicians and Prime Technicians at neighboring tables.

Rex Morris let his upper lip portray disgust. "Who did you say that effective dressed in technician clothes was?"

Nadine Sims eyes narrowed. She said, "That's Matt Edgeworth. In a way, you're right. He worked his way up. Quite a career." She added idly, "And I understand it possibly hasn't reached its peak. Warren Klein, you know, the Prime Technician of the Security FS, is past retirement age and rumored ill."

Rex Morris snorted deprecation. "No effective could ever become a member of the Congress of Prime Technicians. Even if he was appointed by the other FS heads, certainly the Supreme Technician would veto such a farce."

The drinks had arrived and Nadine Sims idly stirred hers with a swizzle stick. "There's nothing in law or tradition against it," she said.

Rex snorted his contempt. "Can you name a case in the past century?"

"He's already reached Technician rank," she said. "Only one step to go."

Rex gave a disgusted shrug of his shoulders, didn't bother to answer her.

She said softly, "I understand he doesn't think so highly of you, either."

"What do you mean by that?" His attention was regained.

She put down her swizzle stick, lifted the glass to her lips and

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watched his face. "The gossip grapevine has it that he wouldn't at all mind a slip on your part, one that would allow him to have you into a Technocourt."

"Great Scott, why? I've never even met the lout."

"You seem to be rather emphatic about a man you've had no contact with. How do you know you wouldn't find him reeking with compatibility if you did meet?"

He glared across the room at the Security Technician. "It seems unlikely."

"Is it because he's with Paula Klein?" she asked.

"Certainly not. Besides, I'm evidently on Techna Klein's unacceptable list."

She finished her drink and tapped on the side of the slender stemmed glass with her swizzle stick. The waiter smoothed to the table with two more of the same.

Nadine said idly, "You'd think in a city of this size there'd be scads of eligible young men, but it evidently isn't that simple for a girl of Paula's rank."

He scowled his incomprehension at her, looking the highly spoiled hereditary aristocrat that he was.

She said, "Paula's brother and father were both Prime Technicians. But most of all, the Supreme Technician is her cousin. Now, really, you can't get much higher than that, can you?"

"Cousin of the Supreme Technician," Rex repeated. "I didn't know that."

Nadine swizzled her new drink. "Not many eligible men in that rarified altitude. Of course, the son of a Hero of the Technate . . ."

Rex grunted his disgust. "My father's notoriety outweighs that prestige."

"I doubt it. When you get to Paula's height anything can be forgiven. For that matter, one of her grandfathers opposed the Temple. How much further can you nonconform?"

Rex Morris said impatiently, "What's all this got to do with that oaf over there being out to get me?"

Nadine smiled at him charmingly. "As you pointed out, it's been more than a century since anyone born an effective reached the Congress of Prime Technicians. It wouldn't hurt anyone with such ambitions to marry himself to Paula Klein."

Rex pursed his lips and whistled silently. "Oh, oh," he said. "I suppose I'd better let it be known that I'm not interested in the young lady's charms. Otherwise I'll have him arresting me for subversive conversation every time I open my mouth to yawn."

"Then you're *not* bewitched by Techna Klein?" Nadine said.

He reached a hand across the table to pat hers. "My dear Nefer-

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titi the Second," he told her, "remember? I'm a neck man. And if you'll just compare hers and yours . . ."

She chuckled, but darted a glance across the room. "Actually, she seems not at all unattractive in a rather . . . well, earnest sort of way."

There was a slight commotion near the entrance and after a moment Technician Matt Edgeworth rose from his table, forgetting to excuse himself to Paula Klein, and made his way toward it, swiveling his hips like a broken field runner as he hurried between the tables. The big man could move fast when he needed to.

There seemed to be an animated discussion at the far end of the room which finally could hardly be ignored by anyone present in the establishment.

Eventually, Matt Edgeworth made his way back through the tables again and to the center of the dance floor. He held up his hands for quiet, his face an emotionless mask.

"May I have everyone's attention." He paused, waiting for the buzz of surprised comment to fade away. "A matter of importance, and since such a large percentage of the city's ranking officials are present . . . You are all familiar with the Prime Technician of the Security FS, Warren Klein."

A man approximately ten years Edgeworth's senior had followed him to the dance floor's edge and now stepped to the middle of the stage while his subordinate retreated several paces.

Rex Morris could recognize family similarities to Paula Klein in the newcomer's face. Warren Klein wore a gray suit, a gray greatcoat over his shoulders like a cloak in traditional Prime Technician style.

He looked about the crowded room, his face drawn. "Possibly an hour ago I was the subject of an assassination attempt."

He waited until the uproar had fallen away.

"The only such attempt on a member of the Congress of Prime Technicians in modern memory. My first reaction was that it was the work of a single crackpot, possibly with a personal grudge. However . . ." he drew an envelope from an inner pocket ". . . one of my aides has brought this to my attention. It arrived in last week's post and was not sooner revealed to me since it seemed to be nothing more than the raving of a mental case. Such are not unknown in our office."

He read the letter aloud. "Prime Technician Warren Klein: You are incapable of holding the office to which you have been appointed. Consequently, unless your resignation is announced in the immediate future, your life is forfeit. The race stagnates as a result of the usurpation of position by incompetents."

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Warren Klein looked up. "This is signed, *"The Nihilists."*

A buzz went through the room again, swelled into a minor uproar.

Warren Klein held up a hand to silence them. "For those who are unacquainted with the term, nihilism was a 19th century revolutionary movement which stressed the need to destroy existing economic and social institutions to prepare for the establishment of a supposedly better order. Direct action such as assassination and arson against the members of the then existing government were among the methods utilized by the nihilists. These terrorists were successful in killing some of the highest ranking officials of the day including Tsar Alexander Second of Russia. In brief, they were not to be underestimated."

Some of the Flop House's occupants were on their feet, their faces expressing emotion ranging from complete unbelief to shock.

The volume of Prime Technician Klein's voice rose. "Preliminary investigation indicates that tonight's assassination attempt was well and thoroughly organized. I escaped with my life by a small margin. But this is not the most important point." He held a moment of silence. "The point is that this morning the Supreme Technician himself received a basically similar letter."

From across the room a voice gasped, "So did I! I . . . I thought it was nonsense." The speaker was Technician Marrison, now cold sober, frightened out of his cups.

"And I!" someone else shouted. "I got one too."

Prime Technician Warren Klein let his eyes go completely around the room again. "We must face reality. For the first time in generations, the Technate is faced with a revolutionary movement. The Security FS expects every member of the Techno class to cooperate to the fullest. My men are alerting everyone of rank in the city. Further information and instructions will be released to you through your individual functional sequences."

His uncle looked up from the tell-screen when Rex entered the living room.

"Oh, sorry," Rex said. "Should I leave?"

"I wasn't talking to anyone," the older man said. "I was looking at a book over in the main library."

"Research?" Rex said lightly. "I thought you were more the aging playboy type, Uncle Bill."

"None of your lip, youngster. As a matter of fact, I was checking up on the nihilists."

Rex said primly, "Rather controversial subject, isn't it?"

"Come off it, my boy, we're in the seclusion of my home. And certainly you couldn't be Leon-

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ard's son without having heard in your time just about anything possible to hear."

Rex Morris dialed himself a drink and slumped into a chair. "I suppose that's the point. The pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. Far as I'm concerned if I never hear another controversial discussion in my life I'll be just as happy."

His uncle looked at him appraisingly. "I don't know whether to believe you or not. At any rate, you had callers while you were gone."

"Callers? That's too bad. I was just out for a stroll."

"Matt Edgeworth and one of his men!"

"Edgeworth? Oh, you mean the security man. That effective type who seems to have wormed his way into a responsible position."

"Don't underestimate Matt Edgeworth, my boy. He's capable and ambitious in an age when few of us bother to be."

"Well, what'd he want, a written guarantee I wouldn't court Paula Klein?"

His uncle said, "The Security FS is trying to run down the nihilists. Part of the program involves checking on all newcomers to the capital. All hotels, all recently occupied apartments—that sort of thing."

"And Edgeworth came to see me? A Technician running errands?"

"That surprised me too," William Morris said. "However, Edgeworth explained that due to your father's prominence he thought it only fitting that someone of higher rank check you."

"That didn't seem to apply the other day when he sent that engineer to pick me up for being in a speakeasy."

The older man said slowly, "What are you doing with a secret compartment in your suitcase, Rex?" Before the other could answer, he added, "Technician Edgeworth requested permission to go through your things. Routine, he said."

"Secret compartment? Oh, in the alligator bag. I had that made some years ago just before going on a tourist trip to the Australian Technate. Thought I might locate something I might want to sneak through their customs—or ours. Romantic nonsense, eh? Never used it. What did Edgeworth say?"

"Nothing. There was nothing in it, of course."

"Well, how are they doing with the assassins? What do you call them?"

"Nihilists. It's stirring up a fantastic mess. I think that the Security FS at first thought to suppress news of the affair. But it buzzed through the speakeasies like a nest of hornets, and then some of the gossip commentators got it into their broadcasts. Absolutely verged on nonconformity. Must have

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shocked quite a few mental old maids."

"I would think so. These gossip commentators are a waspish bunch. I'm surprised the SFS tolerates them. Which reminds me, the other day you dropped a hint that Nadine Sims was . . . how did you put it?"

His uncle squirmed. "She's an opportunist, my boy. I had occasion to check up on her once. Her family are largely junior effectives but she's managed to work her way into Techno status. She'll probably wind up the wife or mistress of some Technician or even Prime Technician."

"But . . . why? Why go to all that bother?"

"Don't ask me. For the prestige, I suppose. The desire to be on top. For the sake of being able to enter such places as the Flop House and rub elbows with the Technate's top mucky-mucks."

Rex Morris had emptied his glass, now he stretched out full length on a couch and relaxed. "A lot of people in this town go to a lot of trouble. Personally, it seems to me this ambition bit interfers with having a normal good time."

His uncle said, "Young fellow, it's your type that set off these nihilists."

"My type?" My type wouldn't set off anything, Uncle Bill," Rex grinned. "No fire at all."

"That, evidently, is their point. They think the Technate is guilty of suppressing initiative. That incompetents head the country and that consequently progress is stifled."

"This is getting on the controversial side, isn't it?"

His uncle snorted disgust. "When people start shooting at members of our class it's about time we find out why, Rex. Even a fool protects his life. In a way, I suppose they're right."

"Great Scott, Uncle Bill!"

"Has it ever occurred to you that there is only one living Hero of the Technate? Why, as recently as when I was a boy there must have been a dozen. Your father is the last to gain the honor and that was accomplished more than three decades ago. Since then there has been no service to the Technate performed of sufficient importance to call for the award. Nobody *bleeds* about anything any more."

Rex Morris yawned. "I suppose everything of importance has already been discovered."

His uncle snorted.

Rex said with only mild interest. "What's this bit about incompetence? Do these murderous malcontents actually suggest that even the Supreme Technician is incompetent?"

"They seem to suggest, my boy, that the whole Techno class is."

Rex grinned again and came to one elbow. "Well, Uncle Bill, I'm evidently getting into an argument no matter how I try to stay out.

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The truth, now. What do you know about teaching, about education?"

His uncle blinked at him. "Don't be ridiculous. I'll let you know I was a good man before my retirement. Why if I'd remained in the Educational FS another year or two I undoubtedly would have been appointed Prime Technician."

Rex was still grinning. "You didn't answer me. How good a teacher were you?"

William Morris was indignant. "I entered the EFS as a Senior Engineer, an appointment suitable to my rank. I don't deal with *teaching*. Anyone of such or above rank is concerned with overall policy, with planning on the higher levels, with . . ."

"That's what I thought."

"Look here, my boy, education is more than just teachers and students. Why, one of the last chief executives of the old United States, before his election to that office, was given the position of president of one of the country's largest universities. When the news reporters interviewed him he admitted he'd had no former connection with education and that he'd have to be 'briefed' on the subject."

"Well," Rex said, tired of the conversation, "I suppose that's what these nihilists are complaining about. Here I am, for instance. One of these days someone will appoint me to a Senior Engineer position in Textiles, Entertainment, Medicine, or what-not. I'm as unqualified in one field as the other."

His uncle said huffily, "You'll have suitable engineers and effectives to handle the routine work below you."

"That I will, and it's all right with me. What's on tonight, Uncle Bill? I have half a mind to get thoroughly kinked."

His uncle looked at his watch. "Not for me, I'm becoming progressively interested in this nihilist thing. I think I'll go and check with some of the boys. Find out what's being said on the higher levels."

Rex yawned. "Well, I'll tag along. I suppose I should be spending more time with these prominent friends of yours. Sooner or later one's going to find he needs a promising young Senior Engineer to fill out his sequence."

Rather than dialing their destination, William Morris threw the car's manual control and proceeded to drive the vehicle as through they were on an unroaded area in the country.

"Isn't that a little on the dangerous side, Uncle Bill," Rex protested mildly. "There's a lot of traffic in this part of town."

His uncle muttered something ambiguous about the Security FS getting excited over the nihilists, and Rex gave it up.

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They crossed town through the distribution and entertainment centers and emerged in a residential area. William Morris pulled up to a curb, dismissed the car and then led his nephew for a block or two on foot, to the younger man's surprise. They entered a large apartment building and took one of the elevators to an upper floor.

The elevator opened into a small reception hall. A voice said, "Welcome Technician Morris. Who is your guest;"

"My nephew, Techno Rex Morris," Uncle Bill said impatiently. "I vouch for him, of course."

Rex said, mystified. "What is this, a private club?"

"Don't be naive," his uncle told him. "Come along." A door opened before them and they proceeded into a large room in which a party seemed to be going on. At least, a considerable number of persons stood, or sat about, drinks in hand in the usual cocktail party wise. Several of them called out to William Morris as he and Rex progressed toward the nearest autobar.

There was a small group around the bar and William Morris growled out a humorous protest to them before they made way and let him dial two drinks. He introduced the group to Rex, two of them were senior engineers, one a technician and two others unassigned Technos like Rex himself, a sixth was a Temple monk.

The technician said to William Morris, "Here's a point that you possibly have an opinion on. We're discussing the motivation of these so-called nihilists."

"Yes," the monk said heavily. He was an obese, florid faced man with a small, almost pouting mouth. "The race has never been so happy as today, under the Technate. What do they expect? What do they want?"

William Morris said tentatively, "What do you mean when you say the race is happy?"

"Well, isn't that obvious?" the monk said. "Past social systems have always had their underprivileged minorities, or majorities, for that matter. Even as late as the middle of the 20th century we had large elements of the population even in the United States and Canada who were ill housed, ill clothed, ill fed, lacking in proper medical care and in opportunity for adequate education. Today, no such elements remain. Everyone has all the needs for happy existence."

Uncle Bill said, "All the needs for existence, possibly, even healthy existence. But what is happiness? Are we actually any happier now than before?"

The monk pouted at him. "I don't seem to follow you. How can anybody be happy if he lacks the basic necessities?"

"If what seems to be your definition of happiness applies, then

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in the old days there was no happiness at all among the poverty striken, while the rich must have spent their time beaming at each other with joy. And the billionaires, of course, would be hard put from jumping with pure glee."

One of the senior engineers, who'd been sipping at a highball through the discussion thus far, now said, "Wait a minute, here. You're not giving us that old jazz about the negros happily strumming away at their banjos on the levee while the plantation owners miserably lived in their luxury in the mansion on the hill?"

One of the unassigned Technos also leapt into the fray. "Yes, just what do *you* mean by happiness?"

William Morris grinned at them. "That's a good question. Actually, I don't think there is any such thing." He nodded his head at the monk. "That's the ultimate foolishness of a religion that promises either a heaven or hell—eternal happiness or eternal sorrow and pain. Neither is possible, neither makes sense, both are contrasts and you can't have the one without the other."

"Now just a minute," the senior engineer protested. "You mean happiness just isn't possible? That's ridiculous, all of us . . ."

"No, now listen," Uncle Bill interrupted. "I don't contend that pleasure, contentment, even ecstacy, aren't possible for comparatively short periods at a time. But a lasting *happiness* just isn't in the cards. The word is meaningless, loosely used, like love. What is love? You love your mother, your wife, your country, and you love apple pie. Ridiculous! The word means nothing."

"If here is no such thing as happiness," the monk said dryly, "The race has certainly been seeking a will-o'-the-wisp for a long time."

The senior engineer was more heated. "You either haven't said enough, or you just don't know what you're talking about."

Uncle Bill dialed himself another drink, waited for it before going on. "The original question was whether our culture is happier now that we've achieved all the essentials for everyone. To illustrate my point, let's go back a bit further in history to 1776 when the American revolutionists were promising Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness to their undecided fellow subjects of King George. As has been pointed out such thinkers as Jefferson and Madison didn't make the mistake of promising *happiness* but merely the opportunity to pursue it. I have a sneaking suspicion that they themselves labored under no misapprehsnsions about the possibility of it being realized. Two hundred years later a second American revolution evolved and once again happiness was promised once cradle to the grave abundance was achieved for every-

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one. Very well, I ask you, are we all happy?"

"We're a damn sight nearer to it than ever before. What could these so-called nihilists even pretend to offer that would improve things?" one of the unassigned Technos said.

Uncle Bill shrugged. "I've never talked to one of them. Perhaps intellectual stimulation. Perhaps they're tired of sitting around belting booze the way we do most of the time."

The Senior Engineer was more irritated than ever. "What is that supposed to mean?"

Uncle Bill's tone took on an edge of exasperation too. "I'm not contending that the former half starved farmer on a quarter acre of land in India lived a desirable life, nor a worker in a textile mill in 19th century England. Before man can realize himself it's self evident that he needs life's necessities. What I have been trying to put over is that happiness is not the point. Largely man leads a rather monotonous existence, day by day. Sometimes his days are lit by temporary pleasure, even ecstacy, somtimes depressed by tragedy, pain, sorrow. These things can happen to either rich or poor.

"The important thing is that the man who has all life's necessities in abundance can lead a more *full* life. His health is more often good, he has lesisure to pursue hobbies or studies or physical pleasures, he more often has prestige in the community, whether or not he deserves it. He has a better chance of being adjusted to the world as he finds it. Surely life is better with all these things. But they don't assure this elusive thing happiness."

Uncle Bill finished his drink and came to a conclusion. "However, so far as I can learn about these nihilists, based on the threatening letters they've been writing, they aren't dealing with happiness at all. They seem to think our culture is stagnating under a hierarchal social system and they want to set it into motion again by some basic changes."

"What changes?" the monk pouted.

"Search me," Uncle Bill shrugged. He turned to say something to his nephew and found that Rex Morris had taken off.

The younger Morris was on the other side of the room, taking in a conversation at a table. It was even more heated than the one in which his uncle was engaged.

A thin young engineer was snapping, "What do you mean democracy failed? We've never bothered to try it. Certainly not since primitive society. Since then we've periodically played lip service to it, and that's about all. Democracy in Athens? Bosh! Sure, the Athenian citizen had it, but for every citizen there was a flock of slaves who had no word in the government at all. The United

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States? Ha! once again. Our ancestors talked a good case of democracy but that was about it. In its early days in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were property and educational requirements that disenfranchised a majority of the population. For that matter, until after the first world war women couldn't vote at all. I won't even mention the discrimination against negro and other minority groups that lasted right up until the founding of the Technate. But above all, real democracy was impossible as long as you had economic autocracy. How can a man freely exercise his vote when he is economically dependent upon someone else?"

"I don't get that," somebody said.

"What could be more obvious? If you're dependent upon someone else for your food, clothing and shelter, you aren't free. A child, dependent upon his parents, isn't free. The family is a dictatorship, a benevolent one but still a dictatorship. Neither is a man who sells his time to another free, not when his basic needs of life are dependent on the selling. So I ask the question again. How can you have a political democracy when you have an economic autocracy? When the means of production are owned and operated by and for a minority? We never gave real democracy a chance, and then, when we established the Technate, we gave such democratic institutions as we did have their death blow."

Rex Morris whistled quietly between his teeth. He looked about the room, covetly. There were possibly seventy-five people, few of them lower in rank than Senior Engineer, and no effective present at all.

He saw someone he recognized, went over and said, "I understand that you and I are waging a feud."

Paula Klein said coldly, "Did you ever hear the term stool pigeon, Techno Morris?" Her brunette beauty flashed in her disdain.

"Don't think so," Rex said. "It doesn't sound so good."

"My brother didn't appreciate the fact that you reported I'd taken you to an effective class speakeasy."

"Look," he explained, "you had already told me that the SFS engineer in front of the place recognized you. Great Scott, he even saluted! And, besides, the fact that some spy turned me in was an indication that everyone there had been spotted. There was no possible way for me to have defended you."

She frowned at him.

He said urgently, "If I'd been brought into a Technocourt the whole thing would have been made public. As it was, we both escaped that embarassment."

"Well," she sighed, "I can't exactly agree with your reasoning,

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but you do put some sort of light on it."

He grinned at her. "How about a drink?"

"You forget, I'm the one person in a million that doesn't slug it down these days. How in the world did you ever get in here, Rex?"

"Oh, Uncle Bill brought me. He's making a point of introducing me to his friends. I'm in no hurry for an appointment but I suppose the sooner I put in my ten years, the sooner I can retire and live life the way it should be lived."

"And how is that? Do you have some particular hobby or . . ."

"Ummm, that I have. Wine, women and song. Not necessarily in that order. Which brings to mind that I saw you at the Flop House the night before last. You *do* go to spots other than speakeasies, then. How about taking pity on a stranger and devoting an evening to exploring the town?"

Her face was expressionless. "I'm afraid that spending time with you, Techno Morris, is somewhat of a hazard. Suppose one of the security men here this afternoon reports our presence? I'm afraid in your rush to alibi yourself I might wind up . . ."

"Security men?" Rex said.

She said bitterly, "Did you think it was effective class speakeasies only that they cover?"

Rex Morris said blankly, "You mean this is a speakeasy and that there are Security FS men here?"

She looked at him as though he was mad. "Where did you think you were? Where did you imagine your uncle had brought you? Did you think that only the effectives went to speakeasies?"

"Great Scott," Rex Morris blurted, "I thought it was, well, sort of a club. I *did* think they were talking rather loosely, but then I'm from the sticks and this is the capital city."

She shook her head at him cynically. "The son of Leonard Morris."

"Stop saying that! I'm sick of being the son of somebody."

"I wonder how he feels about you," she said. Paula Klein turned on her heel and walked off.

Rex Morris stared after her for a brief moment, then turned himself and made his way to the reception hall by which he and his uncle had entered earlier. Doors opened before him and he had no difficulty getting to the ground floor.

He walked down the street and to the nearest public tell-screen. He stood before it and said, "Technician Matt Edgeworth." A voice said, "Carried out," and there was a pause.

An enginer in Security FS uniform appeared on the screen and said, "What was the subject of your call to the Technician please?"

Rex Morris rasped, "I wish to report an openly operating speakeasy."

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"Oh?" the other said. "I can take that information."

Rex Morris rapped, "I'd rather report the matter to Technician Edgeworth."

"Why? I'm afraid Technician Edgeworth is busy."

"Well, tell him Techno Rex Morris wants to talk with him." He added bitterly, "The son of Hero of the Technate Leonard Morris."

The security officer's eyes widened. "Sorry, Techno Morris. I had no idea of your identity. Immediately."

His face was replaced by a scowling Matt Edgeworth. "Yes," he said. "What can I do for you Techno Morris?"

Rex said, "Others seem to be continually dragging me into these confounded speakeasies. This time I thought I'd report directly to you before someone else did."

"Indeed. Where were you taken, and by whom?"

Rex gave him the address and the floor number. The other seemed unimpressed. "And just who took you into this place?"

"I'd . . . I'd rather not say."

Matt Edgeworth looked at him.

Rex Morris cleared his throat. "My uncle, Technician William Morris."

"I see," Edgeworth said. "The matter will be taken care of, Techno Morris." The tell-screen went blank.

Rex Morris stared at it for awhile, reflectively, then shifted his shoulders and went back to the street. There was a Transport FS box on the corner and he summoned a car.

He spent the next quarter of an hour driving up and down the main streets haphazardly. It became obvious, eventually, that he wasn't being followed, or, if so, by someone so accomplished that he wasn't to be detected.

He headed for another part of town, to a residential section largely devoted to effective class apartments. He dismissed the car a full half mile from his destination and walked from that point. His gray, Techno class suit made him somewhat conspicuous in this vicinity but not to any dangerous extent. He looked up and down the street before entering the building of his destination.

On the third floor he let himself into a small flat, began stripping off his clothes. He made his way to the autobar and looked down at it for a minute, then shook his head. He'd had two drinks at the speakeasy, and under the circumstances that was enough. The drinking pace he'd had to assume as a supposed live-it-up lad in this city had been far and beyond his usual intake and he didn't appreciate it in view of his present position.

Dressed in effective class garb, Rex went to a closet, opened it, pushed aside various standard arti-

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cles of clothing to reveal a small chest. This involved a key. He opened it and stared down at two or three handguns, half a dozen grenades, and a sawed-off shotgun. He thought about it for a moment, finally selected a grenade, then closed and locked the chest.

Rex Morris was late in coming down to breakfast in the morning but his uncle was waiting for him.

The older man said, his voice dangerously low, "You didn't bother to say goodbye when you left me yesterday."

"No, I didn't," Rex said. "I wanted to talk to you about that."

"And I to you. Start talking."

"Well, frankly . . .well, Great Scott Uncle Bill, do you think you ought to be going into places like that? Not to speak of taking me. I don't even have an appointment yet. I'll never get a decent one if word goes around I'm carrying on Dad's non-conformist ways."

"Leave your father out of it. I don't agree with some of his extreme views, but Leonard was always a *man*."

"I don't like the way you say that I've got a right to my own opinions and one of them is that the Technate shouldn't allow these cesspools of uncontrolled controversy. Why, there was even a Temple monk there yesterday. How can the Technate remain on an even keel, when every institution we have is being attacked?"

His uncle growled, "I'm beginning to wonder if we haven't been on an even keel for too damn long. But right now, that isn't the point. The point is that after I'd taken you into that club . . ."

"That speakeasy!"

". . . yesterday, you left and reported it to the Security FS."

"What did you expect me to do? I'm a loyal Techno!"

William Morris stared at him for a long moment. He shook his head. "The second generation. The son of Leonard Morris, the nonconformist."

Rex Morris said heatedly, "I told you where I stood. I'm not interested in being the son of Leonard Morris. All I want to do is take my rightful position in the Technate. Get a decent appointment, put in my ten years of service, then retire and devote myself to enjoying life. That's *all* I want."

His uncle said flatly, "You're old enough to make your own decisions, and I'd be the last to rally to the cause of nonconformism. I stop in at a speakeasy once in a blue moon, just for amusement, just to see what goes on. Nevertheless, I don't want anyone in my home who turns me in to the Security FS in a panic because he's afraid his reputation might be tarnished by association with such as me. No thank you."

Rex flushed. "Does that mean . . .?"

"It does indeed. Explain it to

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your father, however you wish."

"I'll get my things and leave immediately."

"Take your time, Rex."

In his room, before packing, Rex Morris stood before the tell-screen and said, "Housing Functional Sequence."

A voice said, "Carried out," and a second later a desk faded in, behind it a junior effective. She looked at him and smiled.

Rex said, "I'm Rex Morris, unassigned Techno, Serial One-224A-1326, waiting an appointment in this city. I would like an adequate single apartment." He added, "In a part of town suited to my rank, of course."

"Of course," she said. "Serial One, you said. May I have the rest of that again, please?" She dialed the full identification code on an instrument on her desk and a card slid into view of a smaller screen before her.

Impressed, she said, "Techno Morris, could I suggest that you stay at one of the better hotels until you have found adequate quarters? We'll assign an effective to your needs at once. He will be able to devote full time to . . ."

Rex said impatiently, "I'm not that difficult to please. I'd like a place to go to immediately. Something that is available this morning. If I'm unsatisfied I'll check with you later."

"Very well." She went through various other motions, made two calls, then turned to him again. She gave him an address, an apartment number.

He packed his things into his three bags, placed them in the servo compartment of the room, turned to the tell-screen again and said, "Have the things in the servo delivered to this address." He looked down at the paper on which he'd noted his new apartment number and read it off.

A voice said, "Carried out."

Rex left, not bothering to look up his uncle for a final farewell. A rueful smile was very faint on his face.

He went to Nadine Sims apartment that afternoon without calling her in advance, other, of course, than requesting her apartment of the elevator robo. When he stepped into her reception room, however, she was awaiting him, a questioning smile on her face, two glasses in her hands.

"Surprise, surprise," she said. "I wasn't expecting you." She offered one of the glasses.

"If this is a John Brown's Body, no thanks," Rex said to her. "You worked that particular wile on me the other night. Was I kinked before the evening was through!"

"You were? Heavens, all that uproar about the nihilists sobered me up. Anyway, this is a Rattlesnake, you said you went for them in your part of the Technate."

"That I did," Rex said, follow-

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ing her into the living room. "My what a memory the girl has."

"The better to spider you into my web."

"Ah, ha, so that's the pitch."

She made him comfortable in a deep chair which sported a built in autobar and hookah, sat across from him and eyed him quizzically. "You're making for quite a bit of gossip these days, my lad from the wild west."

He sighed and tried the drink. "Oh? Well, that's just what I don't want but it doesn't seem to do me any good."

She laughed at him, shook her head. "If you don't want gossip, I'd suggest you not pull such capers as reporting to the SFS a speakeasy in which your uncle and half his friends are having a grand old time arguing about the most controversial subjects imaginable."

He stared at her. "How in the world did you know that?"

She chuckled at him, shook her head again. "Rex, you have no idea how gossip ridden a capital city can be. The whole matter was probably on the air half an hour after it happened, cleverly hidden in hints and innuendoes, of course."

He grunted. "Well, did any of the commentators mention the fact that Uncle Bill politely booted me out of his house today?"

Her eyes were suddenly narrow. "Oh, no. You don't mean permanently? Your uncle is one of the most popular men in town. You'll never get into such spots as the Techno-Casino and the Flop House if you've antagonized him."

He finished off his drink, dialed another from the chair, while saying, "Well, consider him antagonized. I don't care. I wish people would stop sucking me into situations in which I'm not interested." He said sourly, "Am I the only object of gossip in town these days, what else is going on?"

"You come under the head of light news," she said, her voice less enthusiastic now. "The big item is the progress of the nihilist gang. Evidently they're stronger than was first thought. Stronger and more vicious. They made an attempt on the Supreme Bishop of the Temple, last night."

"The *Supreme Bishop!*" Rex Morris' eyes widened in disbelief.

"A bomb," she said. "His Serenity escaped, but one of his retainer monks was hit by a flying fragment."

"Killed?" Rex said quickly.

"Well, no, barely wounded."

Rex Morris shook his head. "And people think it's strange I'm so indignant about the speakeasies. No wonder outfits like the nihilists develop with half the people in town saying the most controversial things possible. Talk about them and sooner or later you start doing them—that's what I say."

"Do you?" Nadine Sims

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yawned. "Well, to what do I owe this pleasant visit, Techno Morris?"

He looked up at her, surprised. "I beg your pardon?"

"I have plans for this evening. I wondered if it was anything special you came to see me about."

He came to his feet suddenly. "I get it."

She stood too, put her drink down on a handy table, and stepped over to him. "Now, don't be silly. I simply have an appointment."

"Of course you do. Someone, I assume, who'll take you to the Hush Puppy Room, the Casino, or the Flop House—or one of the other prestige joints where effectives on the make usually aren't allowed."

Her hand came up and smacked him fiercely across the lower face. She raised the other hand for another swing, and he caught it roughly. He grinned sourly down into her eyes. "Truth hurts, eh?" he growled.

"You soft headed, soft living snob," she snarled.

"How you go on," he said, dropping her hand. He turned on his heel and headed for the door.

"Don't bother to come back," she snapped.

He grinned over his shoulder at her. "The sea is loaded with fish like you, sweetie."

At the curb before her house he twisted his mouth in silent thought: Was he pushing things too fast? For the first time since his arrival in the capital he wished he had someone with whom to consult. Well, forget about it. That was a luxury beyond him.

He walked toward the center of the city, turning several corners in the process, making a point of traversing several streets with little traffic either car or pedestrian. It was obvious that he wasn't being followed.

He summoned a car, threw it onto manual control and headed for the section of town he'd been in the day before. Once again he dismissed the vehicle half a mile or so from his destination and finished the trip by foot. Safety, Rex Morris had decided long ago, was a matter of taking infinite pains.

He walked up to the small effective class apartment, let himself in and sank into an easy chair. He dialed himself a weak Irish and soda and sat sipping it while he thought.

The drink tasted terrible. He went into the kitchenette and poured the balance of it into the sink, then went back into the living room and stood in its center trying to come to a decision.

One evening was as good as another. He strode with quick decision to the closet, opened it and pushed the clothing impatiently to one side, fishing the key from his pocket to open the hidden chest.

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He opened it, stared down at his small arsenal.

A voice behind him said, "Ah, our nihilist inspects his weapons."

Rex Morris' hand dipped quickly into the chest, emerged with a short barrelled Parabellum. He twirled, the gun at the ready.

Matt Edgeworth stood at the door, his thumbs tucked into the corners of his uniform jacket pockets. His rugged face wore a cynical twist. He ignored the other's gun, closed the door behind him, made his way to the middle of the room and lowered his bulk into a chair next to the autobar. He leaned forward and dialed himself a drink. While Rex watched him, still unbelieving, the bar delivered a long glass of a dark brew.

"Stout," Matt Edgeworth told him. "Very proletarian, eh? Sometimes I think I'm the last of the proletarians." He chuckled, looked down at the marks of technician rank on his Security FS uniform.

Rex Morris walked back, confronting the other, said tightly, "I suppose your men are knee deep about the place."

"To the contrary," Edgeworth said easily. "I came alone. Why should I share the prestige of having captured the notorious nihilist? Especially since said desperate criminal is also the son of an overly publicized Hero of the Technate."

"You can leave my father out of this, Edgeworth. Anything I've done is on me alone. Forget about Leonard Morris."

"It's all right with me. I always did think he was overrated. A couple of years work in a laboratory and he's a tin hero for the rest of his life."

The Parabellum was trained at the other's belt buckle. Rex Morris said tightly, "You seem to have a lot of confidence for someone who's covered. Is there any particular reason?"

Matt Edgeworth said sourly, "How long do you think you could have continued narrowly missing your supposed victims before someone caught on that this generation's breed of assassins hasn't the guts to really kill anybody?"

Rex Morris' jaw tightened and the finger on the trigger of the gun whitened.

Matt Edgeworth came to his feet. His right hand darted out with surprising speed considering the man's size and chopped at the other wrist. The gun fell to the floor. Edgeworth sat down again, said conversationally, "Was it loaded? Have a seat, old man. Drink?"

Rex glared at him, dialed another Irish whiskey, without soda this time, and sank into the chair opposite his unwanted guest. "How'd you find me?" he growled.

Edgeworth shrugged. "You know," he said conversationally, "that's a popular fancy that seems to have come down through the

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centuries. The mistaken belief that the police are on the stupid side. Believe me, *Techno* Morris, they aren't." He began to enumerate on his fingers. "One, you're the son of the controversial Leonard Morris, so obviously we'd keep track of you. Two, the nihilist letters began appearing after your arrival. Three, you were just a little too precious in the way you avoided anything controversial. Four, the night of the so-called assassination attempt on Warren Klein, something happened to one of the agents who were trailing you; he was doped at his post. You have an alibi for the time involved which is something I don't quite understand, however it doesn't explain the doped agent. Five, you were just *too* much of a heel in exposing both Paula Klein and your uncle when they did a bit of innocent attending of speakeasies. Six . . . Do we really need a six? For that matter, we have a seven, eight, nine and ten."

Rex Morris grunted his disgust, "An amateur doing a professional's job," he said bitterly in self deprecation. "Shall we go? I suppose I'm under arrest."

"Oh, not yet," the Security Technician said easily, "Let's talk awhile. Where did you get your arsenal? The rifle, these guns you have here, the grenades?"

"Mostly out of private gun collections around Taos," Rex said. "I pretended to be a collector."

"No accomplices, eh?"

"None."

"Well, we'll find out about that later," Edgeworth said, nodding his head. "For instance, I'm interested in how you got the use of two effective class apartments, this one and the one from which you took a shot at Warren Klein. But tell me, just what did you have in mind?"

"Tell *me* something first," Rex growled. "How did you find me here?"

Edgeworth grinned his contempt. "Dip you hand into your jacket pocket. I don't know if it would be the right or left one."

Mystified, Rex plunged his hands into his pockets. One of them came out with a button sized object he didn't recognize.

"Transmitter," Edgeworth grinned at him. "Why follow you about the streets when you've been planted with a nice little broadcasting station that can notify me just where you are, just any time at all? The moral of the story is not to get too close to a girl."

"Nadine!" Rex grunted.

The other raised his heavy eyebrows. "Please. You mean Senior Engineer of the Security FS, Nadine Sims. Let's have correct titles here, *Techno* Morris." Edgeworth turned back to the autobar and refilled his glass. "Now, once again, *why*? Just what did you have in mind with all this masquerade and phony heroics?"

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"The overthrow of the Technate!" Rex snapped back.

Technician Edgeworth stared at him for a moment, then began to laugh. "All by yourself, you pipsqueak? The overthrow of the Technate! How, in the name of Veblen? By *almost* shooting a few upper rank Technos?"

Rex Morris took a deep breath and stared down at the floor. "An amateur . . ." he repeated. He looked up at the other. "No," he said. "I didn't expect to do it all myself. All I hoped to accomplish was to set people to thinking again. Give them a shot in the arm, a mental jolt. A realization that it was possible that the Technate wasn't necessarily the best of all possible worlds and that it might be worth considering alternatives."

"I don't seem to follow your reasoning."

Rex shrugged his despair. "We've been in a rut for generations. Whatever happened to such ambitions as the conquest of space, as the improvement of the race by controlled genetics, as the eventual attainment of . . . the Godhead? At first the Technate seemed to be a step in advance, but it bogged down into a rut like that the Egyptians were in for millennia. I hoped to start a controversy, to start people to thinking, to make them afraid, to . . . well, stir things up."

"Your father had nothing to do with this crackpot idea, eh?"

"Nothing at all."

Matt Edgeworth thought about that for awhile. "I think perhaps things would be better if he did." he mused.

Rex Morris stared at him, uncomprehending.

Matt Edgeworth said slowly, "I think the nihilist threat would be more impressive if we revealed that a Hero of the Technate was involved. Who knows? Perhaps we'll find that a few other notables —your uncle, perhaps—are also in it."

Rex Morris snorted his contempt. "You'll have a hard time proving that in a Technocourt. Once I appear I'll tell the whole story, and I can prove every point. I did it all myself."

"Uh huh," the other said thoughtfully. "And such a trial would give you the opportunity to make your little speech. To make a martyr of yourself. A little hero all of your own. In fact, there's nothing you'd like better than such a trial, is there, *Techno* Morris?"

Rex said nothing.

Edgeworth twisted his face in his characteristic grimace. "Well, don't count too much on having one."

Rex looked up sharply, "Just what do you mean by that?"

"I mean," the other said coldly, "that you have precious little chance, *Techno* Morris, of ever getting into court. I'm afraid that we'll be confronted with the need

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of, ah, eliminating you, perhaps whilst you make your third assassination attempt. Come to think of it, possibly *after* you've made your attempt. Who knows, this time you might even be successful in another attempt on Warren Klein."

Rex shook his head in lack of understanding. "I don't see what motivates you," he said.

Matt Edgeworth slipped a handgun from an underarm holster and trained it on the other. He said, "Some of the things you've said are correct. A change is called for. Sooner or later it'll be made—I assume. But after me, if there is anything I can do about it. You're playing with revolution, *Techno* Morris. Do you know what that can mean? Have you ever seen pictures from the old days of former dictators, police agents, even minor officials, hanging by their heels from lampposts? Do you know what volcanos can be stirred up by social forces once unleashed? No thank you. After me the deluge, perhaps, but if there's anything I can do about it, not until *after me.*"

He was warming to his subject. "Right now the Technate is lax, partly because you hereditary Technos are too spineless, too soft. We need a stronger Security FS. Fine, I'm willing to provide it. With this feather in my cap, the crushing of the nihilists, I'll be slated for the Congress of Prime Technicians. Once there—who knows? The Prime Technician of the Security FS is no minor role. We've never had a Supreme Technician from this Functional Sequence, but why not set the precedent?"

"You?" Rex laughed at him. "You become Supreme Technician? On the ambitious side, aren't you Edgeworth?"

Edgeworth glowered at him, bleakly. "There've been ambitious men come to the top before, *Techno* Morris, and the hierarchy is the ideal governmental form to expedite the matter. As an effective born, you probably look on me as lacking in education, but, believe me, I've looked into this particular subject. You ever hear of Atahualpa?"

Rex scowled at him. "The last of the Incas."

"That's right. Remember what happened to the Incas? Their social system was a primitive equivalent of our Technate, with the Inca at the very top, instead of a Supreme Technician. When Francisco Pizarro landed, all he had to do was kidnap, and later kill, Atahualpa, and the whole machinery of government fell into his hands. A few score strong, ambitious men seized a quarter of all South America." He grunted his contempt. "Do you think wishy-washy milksops like Warren Klein, and such hereditary *Technos,* are going to stand in the way of *men,* like me?"

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There was a fanatical note in his voice now that Rex Morris hadn't noticed before.

Rex said, "You really hate us Technos by birth, don't you Edgeworth?"

"I got to my position the hard way," the other said. "The way the Technate was originally meant to run."

Rex Morris said, "And I suppose if you got to the top—and I assume you have a gang you'd take along with you—then the old system of nepotism and favoritism wouldn't continue, eh? *Your* son would never get further than effective rank, unless he really qualified, eh?"

"We'll see about that when the time comes," Edgeworth said flatly. "Let's go now."

Rex began to turn, as though heading for the door, then he took a deep breath spun and plunged toward the Security man.

Breath whooshed from Matt Edgeworth's massive body as the smaller man's arms went around his waist. The gun clattered to the floor and the two men fell atop it.

Edgeworth's roar held more of disgust than rage. "Why you pipsqueak!" He pounded short jabs into Morris' ribs, began rolling atop the other crushingly.

Morris' mouth worked in a silent prayer to some unbelieved in diety, as he managed to squirm his right hand into his jacket pocket. He was rapidly losing control under the heavier man's blows, but he shook his head for clarity. He made a supreme effort, grabbed at the other desperately, rubbed his index finger and thumb over Matt Edgeworth's naked hand.

He groaned, "All right, I've had it."

Matt Edgeworth came to his feet, gave the other a quick kick in the ribs in disgust. "That was a fool trick," he snarled. "I've got fifty pounds on you and the training of a Security effective. Another couple of minutes and you'd have been enjoying a set of broken bones, *Techno* . . ."

The big Security official's voice suddenly fell away. His eyes glazed. He froze in his standing position.

Rex Morris stood up, allowed himself another brief groan for the sake of heavy blows taken. He looked at the stricken Edgeworth, muttered, "Thanks Dad, although I doubt if you ever figured on that instant anesthetic discovery of yours ever being used for this purpose."

He hurried to the bathroom, washed his fingers quickly. It took time, but it was possible for the paralyzing drug to seep through even the heaviest skin. He returned to the living room, moving rapidly. He took up Matt Edgeworth's hand weapon and stuffed it into his belt. He felt the other over and emerged with a wallet. Inside was an identification card for a Security FS

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Technician. Rex Morris hesitated momentarily, then brought forth his own identity card and switched with the other.

He had about twelve minutes to go, he figured, before Edgeworth snapped out of the coma. For a long moment he stared at the security man, even got to the point of taking the gun out again and thumbing back the safety release.

But no. A life time's conditioning isn't to be fluffed away that quickly. He pushed the weapon back into his belt and hurriedly left the room.

In ten minutes, the search would be under way. He was in the clutch, now. He was on the run.

There are few places to which to run in a completely integrated society.

There had been something that Edgeworth had said. It hadn't struck a spark by itself, but it had combined with other combustible material. Possibly, just possibly, Rex Morris had time to check. To what end, he wasn't sure.

Before the apartment house in which he'd established his ineffectual hideout, he trotted to the closest Transport FS call box and summoned a car. He made no effort to use the manual controls, they were slower than robo guidance of the vehicle. He dialed the entertainment area of town that Paula Klein had taken him to several days before.

He wasn't going to be able to use Transport FS cars, once the pursuit got under way. Security would be able to monitor every one in the city, but for now he felt still safe. He dismissed the car half a block from his destination and proceeded to the effective class speakeasy on foot.

He found even less difficulty in entering than he had expected. He stood before the tell-screen and a voice said, "You are recognized Techno Morris. You may enter."

He pushed into the speakeasy rooms beyond, and a few heads went up at his entrance. He forced himself to take it easy and drifted to a table where an animated discussion was taking place. He made himself listen, his facial expression registering interest.

Rex recognized one or two of the debaters from his former visit. One was the heavy-set junior effective who had been railing against motherhood the last time. Now he was saying, "It's an antiquated institution. It fitted the conditions that applied a thousand years ago, possibly even a couple of centuries ago but now it hangs on through sheer inertia."

From the side of his mouth, Rex said to the man standing next to him, "What're they discussing?"

"Marriage," the other said, turning back to the debaters.

"This is how it sums up," the speaker said. "To quote an old jingle:

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Higamous hogamous, woman's monogamous
Hogamous higamous, man is polygamous

"That's the way it is in nature. It's a man's instinct to impregnate as many females of the species as he can. Keeps the race going. It's a woman's to secure herself a protector and provider to care of her and her infant during the period she's incapacitated. That keeps the race going too. Very good. In primitive clan society it was pretty well figured out. The community as a whole took care of all its members, and society was a matriarchy in which the women made the rules and regulations. However, with the coming of metal tools and weapons—which women weren't capable of using to the extent men were—and of privately owned property, the matriarchy gave way to the patriarchy, and women took a back seat. Man, now head of his own individual family, wanted to make sure the children he supported were his own, wanted to make sure his property descended to his sons. So what did he invent in the way of insurance? Virginity and adultery. In entering marriage, women were forced to have the one, to refrain from the other. And that's the basis of marriage as we know it still today."

"Well, what's wrong with it?" somebody demanded.

"It no longer applies," the plump speaker said reasonably. "Neither woman nor child depends any longer on the father as a provider. Society takes care of both. Nor is the inheritance of property of a great deal of importance aside from family keepsakes and such. The institution of marriage is antiquated and so are such corollaries of it as a woman's virginity and prohibitions against adultery."

"So what do you propose as an alternative?" Rex Morris' neighbor asked sceptically.

"Complete promiscuity," the other told him, his voice indicating nothing was more obvious. "Let two—or more, for that matter—people live together just so long as they're happy together. Then let them split, as soon as one, or both, are no longer satisfied."

"Fine," said somebody else, "but how do you keep any record of children at all? How do you know who belongs to who? Who your father is, who your relatives are?"

"Go back to the matriarchal system. Take your mother's name instead of your father's," the junior effective said reasonably. "It always has been a wise man who knows his own father anyway. But everybody knows his mother."

"Great Scott," Rex Morris muttered under his breath. He had stopped being of any interest at all to anyone in the room, so he saun-

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tered on, trying to remember the route over which Paula had taken him on the day of the raid.

It wasn't too big a problem, one room led off the other and he finally found himself in the corridor which led to the small office and the senior effective known as Mike. He didn't bother to announce himself at the door but pushed his way through.

The florid faced effective looked up from the desk, scowled for a moment in lack of recognition. Then he said, "Rex Morris, Paula Klein's friend. How'd you make out the other day?"

Rex found a chair on the other side of the desk and sat down in it. "What interests me," he said coldly, "is how you made out."

Mike scowled again, in puzzlement over the tone of voice. "Oh, I got released after the usual routine."

"What usual routine?" Rex said softly.

The other stared at him for a long moment. He said finally, "What did you want, Techno Morris?"

Rex Morris brought from his pocket the orange colored identity card he'd taken from Matt Edgeworth. He held it up negligently knowing that at the distance involved neither name nor identity photo could be made out. "The name is Technician Morris," he said, "and although my appointment is in the western section of the Technate, my rank holds here. We don't put up with speakeasies where I'm from and this whole atmosphere disgusts me. I'm arresting you and taking you in. And this time, Mike, you won't be released after a *usual routine.*"

The other's expression of surprise had turned to disgust.

"Listen," he said, "why don't you do a little thinking before jumping into something you don't know anything about. I'm telling you, you wouldn't have me down at headquarters for ten minutes. Do you think a place like this could operate for a single day without connections, without protection?"

Rex Morris let his face register disbelief and then suspicion.

"You're lying. What you're suggesting is that higher-ups are protecting this . . . this nonconformist, controversial hotbed."

Mike looked at him in open wonderment. "And you're the son of Leonard Morris, eh? The guy who got such a name for sounding off. How things can change." He leaned forward and his voice got harder. "Look here, Technician. Things might be different out west, but here in the capital we've got protection. Plenty of it. You know who I'd go to if somebody with your rank gave me any gufF?"

Rex said softly, "No, who?"

Mike told him.

Rex stared for a long, unbelieving moment. Then he said, "Then

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why the raid the other day? Where was your protection then?"

Mike spread his hands. "Atmosphere. Who'd want to come to a speakeasy if it wasn't forbidden, illegal, under the table? Makes it romantic, I suppose."

On the wall the tell-screen lit up and Matt Edgeworth's grim face looked out upon them. Momentarily startled, Rex Morris at first thought it a personal call, rather than a general city-wide broadcast.

Edgeworth bit out, "We of the Security FS have flushed one of the nihilists who have been committing acts of violence including assassination. This dangerous criminal is still at large, after fighting his way out of a trap. He is desperate and armed. All security ranks are ordered to fire first and upon sight. The nihilist mentality is such that he may attempt to take his own life, upon threat of capture by blowing himself up with his captors. He is known to be in the possession of bombs. I repeat, fire first and upon sight. All citizens belonging to other functional sequences, upon sighting this man, should immediately report him to the nearest Security officer. The following photos are of the criminal Rex Morris."

The screen began flashing moving shots of Rex, taken from different angles and from varying distances. Rex wondered briefly where Edgeworth had been able to dig them up so quickly.

Even as the photographs were showing, Matt Edgeworth's voice went on, urgently. "Patriotic citizens are urged to stand firm against this menace. Indications are that high ranking names are involved in the nihilistic conspiracy. No one's life or position is safe until the plot has been completely exposed and dealt with."

The fat was in the fire now. When the broadcast ended, Rex sighed and brought the gun from his pocket and trained it on Mike who was watching him nervously.

"Stand up," Rex said.

Mike stood, his hands raised. "Now look here . . ." he began.

"Quiet," Rex told him, "and possibly I won't have to kill you."

"Look, I gotta wife and . . ."

"I'll keep that in mind," Rex said, "Now turn your back."

Mike paled. "You're not gonna . . ."

"Turn around," Rex snapped. When the other did, he clipped him with the butt of the gun on the back of the head. The senior effective collapsed forward to the floor.

Rex Morris turned his eyes up briefly in another short prayer—to whatever diety agnostics call upon in stress—this time that the man wasn't seriously hurt. He had no time to check. He opened the door to the closet, fumbled around to find the door by which he and Paula Klein had escaped during the other day's raid. He pushed

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through it and into the narrow corridor beyond. In moments he was on the street.

He summoned a car as quickly as possible, knocked out its tell-screen with the butt of his gun, threw it onto manual control and made his way across the city.

He wasn't up on the abilities of the Security FS. He knew they had of recent years had little opportunity to exercise the ultra-measures they probably had at their command. It had been a long time since crime, political or otherwise, had been a major item. He was hoping the SFS was rusty. That the sort of dragnet that must be part of their arsenal would take time, the more the better, to put into operation. However, he was aghast at the speed with which Edgeworth had got on the air.

On top of the urgency under which he was operating, his mind was awhirl. He couldn't reconcile the developments of the past few hours with lifetime beliefs and experiences. He was in far over his head.

He pulled down a wide boulevard near the river, left the air cushion car and took to his feet. The broken tell-screen was going to be automatically reported to the Transport FS and possibly Security was already monitoring all cars. It behooved him to get out of the vicinity with as much speed as he could manage without attracting attention.

He reasoned that at this stage, comparatively few pedestrians would have seen the broadcast Matt Edgeworth had made. He had no doubt that after it had been repeated a few score times over the next hours that everyone in the city would be a potential danger to him, but not quite yet.

He found the apartment house he wanted. Took the appropriate elevator to the top floor. At the door of Lizzy Mihm's residence he pushed the little black button as he'd seen his uncle do the day of the cocktail party. He realized glumly that this was one of the few places in town he dare visit. Had he announced himself in the ordinary manner, and had Lizzy Mihm seen that broadcast, as she almost surely had . . .

The door opened and the hefty, short statured Lizzy was beaming at him. "Why . . . *Rex.* William's dear, *dear* nephew from the west."

As the door opened, Rex Morris had slid his right foot forward to block its closing, but on the face of things, Lizzy Mihm hadn't seen Matt Edgeworth's broadcast. He wondered why. The Security technician had been able to utilize the emergency facilities to go on every tell-screen in the area, whether or not it was turned on, and whether or not it had been in use at the time for some other purpose. However, there was no point in questioning good fortune.

"*Do* come in," Lizzy was saying.

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She had a beefy, several ringed hand on his sleeve as she led him into one of her living rooms. She giggled archly, "I don't believe I had the chance to tell you before that your father used to be one of my *best* beaux back before I met Freddy."

"Freddy?" Rex said blankly.

"My husband. I'm afraid your father was much too . . . well, *disputatious* for little me. *Gracious,* the terrible reputation he did bring on himself."

They were in the living room. Lizzy Mihm bustled about like a chickless biddy hen, insisting on getting a pillow to stuff behind him in the already overstuffed chair. She bustled some more at the autobar, brought him a long drink of doubtful ingredients.

Finally she wound up across from him, her face beaming. "Now what is it, Rex?—now you must call me Elizabeth. A young man doesn't call on a, well, practically middle-aged, woman like me unless he has something important in mind. Now does he?"

Silently he thanked her for allowing him to get to the point without unseeming haste.

"Techna Mihm . . ."

"Elizabeth, now!"

"Well, yes . . . Elizabeth. Uncle Bill said something the other day that just came to mind a little while ago. He said that on occasion you've entertained the Supreme Technician here."

"Jack? Why of course, my dear, *dear* boy. Jack was . . ." she giggled here . . . "why Jack was one of my boy friends. Before I met Freddy, of course." She put a finger to her lips and thought a moment. "Jack was just before I met your lovely, *lovely* father."

Rex winced. He had never heard his father so misaptly described. He said, "Uh . . . Elizabeth, it's very important for me to talk to the Supreme Technician."

She blinked at him. "Oh, dear. It is?" She looked at her watch. "Well, you mean today?"

"Just as soon as possible." He made his voice very earnest, not that it took much of an effort.

She put a hefty hand to her mouth, went "Tch, tch, tch."

He said urgently, "This is very important, Elizabeth."

"Of course, my dear, dear boy, I believe you. You look quite like your father in his most *urgent* mood. Let me see, I suppose there's just nothing for it. We'll have to break in on his dinner. He'll never be at his office this time of day."

He stared at her. "You mean you know John McFarlane well enough to intrude . . . uh, that is, visit him, well, just any time," He had been thinking only in terms of a tell-screen conversation.

She fluttered at him. "Rex, do let me tell you a secret. Men with ranks such as Jack's aren't nearly so busy as everyone supposes. I

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know you'll think this is just *awfully* controversial of me, but these days such offices are mostly, well, figurehead positions. And sometimes I suspect that's been true—now you'll think this just awful of me—practically all through history. When a position gets so big that one man simply can't handle it—why then one man simply stops handling it. No matter if his job is king, president, or supreme technician."

He didn't know if he quite followed that or not. He said, "Well, then . . ."

"Wait just a moment until I get into something, well, more *flattering*. You see, Rexie . . ."

Rex Morris inwardly winced again.

. . . Jack is *still* one of my dearest boy friends. Now that Freddy has passed away of course." She swept from the room, giggling archly over her shoulder.

"Great Scott," Rex muttered softly.

Lizzy Mihm was evidently one of the few persons still in town who bothered to have a privately owned limousine. She flutteringly explained as they stepped into it in the servo-term in the basement of her building that she was just too nervous to go about the trouble of dialing a Transport FS garage and having one sent when she wished to go somewhere.

"I'm just always in *such* a hurry," she twittered.

Rex murmured something and climbed in beside her. He doubted if the TFS had many cars of this antiquity on hand. In fact, he suspected it was an old electro model, although he'd never seen one before.

Lizzy Mihm dialed the palace of the Supreme Technician and settled back to her gushing chatter while the car dodged into traffic. She must have had private coordinates, Rex decided, when the vehicle went through the guarded entry gates without pause. Four uniformed sentries snapped to attention at the ancient vehicle's approach.

Lizzy Mihm giggled. "They all know my car," she said happily. "Now that's one value of having your own, all your *very* own."

Rex had mental fingers crossed. This was all going unbelievably well. Impossibly, unbelievably well. After a day of repeated blows which had crumpled plans years in the making, this was coming much too easily.

They buzzed past the front portico, so famous in newscasts, and proceeded to the rear of the building. Lizzy bustled from the car, explaining some of the workings of the palace as she went and hardly waiting for Rex.

"It's all such a bother, you know, "she said. "Poor Jack. He'd just love to spend his time, all of his time, I suspect, fishing off Yucatan. But all this *bother*. He has

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to shake somebody's hand. Or give somebody an award. Or have a telecast made of him greeting some committee. You'll never believe me, but he puts in a full three hour day, four day week, like anybody else."

Which seemed to negate her earlier claim that John McFarlane was only a figurehead, Rex decided...

She swept up the four or five steps of a rear entrance, fluttered a cheerful welcome to the armed Security engineer there and hustled into the interior. The SFS man evidently didn't particularly notice Rex. Lizzy Mihm was as at home as she had earlier implied and evidently anyone with her was automatically in.

Chattering, she led him down a short hallway to a door, once again guarded, this time by two Security officers of senior engineer rank. Lizzy beamed at them, said, "Hello, Morton. And how are you Ernest? Is your dear, *dear* wife any better?"

Ernest mumbled something in return as he opened the door for her.

Lizzy Mihm swept through, Rex trailing behind.

He had expected the personal apartments of the Supreme Technician, John McFarlane.

Instead, he was in a moderately large conference room.

Confronting him, most of them seated about a heavy mahogany table, were possibly thirty-five or forty men and women. Of them, Rex had met three or four personally at one time or another. Most of the others he recognized from news casts, publicity shots, articles in popular periodicals. There was a hush as the newcomers entered.

Lizzy Mihm said incisively, "May I introduce Rex Morris our currently most notorious citizen of Technate?"

A tall, thin man who'd been standing to one side, glass in hand at the autobar, was the first to raise his voice about the resulting hum of conversation. It was John McFarlane, Supreme Technician of the Technate of North America.

He raised his glass in a half salute to Rex Morris. "We were wondering how to get hold of you," he said. "Welcome to the ultimate speakeasy."

"Speakeasy?" Rex Morris said. His eyes went around the room uncomprehendingly.

From half way down the table Warren Klein, dressed in his gray uniform of Prime Technician of the Security FS, said dryly, "And. even here, you see, we have police. Thanks for missing me the other night, Morris, but next time, please, don't make it quite so close."

Rex Morris' eyes went from the Security chief to the Supreme Technician and then to Lizzy

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Mihm. Somehow she looked different, her fluttery aspects a thing of the past.

Supreme Technician McFarlane took mercy on him.

"Sit down, Rex," he said. "We've gathered for the purpose of meeting you after receiving a call from Elizabeth that you were on the way. We'll have individual introductions ltaer. Now let it suffice for me to say that with one or two unavoidable absentations, we have present the Congress of Prime Technicians and a dozen or more retired holders of the same rank. Plus . . ." and he bowed his head here to Elizabeth Mihm ". . . various other honored members of this—speakeasy."

An easy, unhurried stranger in the garb of a Prime Technician brought Rex a drink from the autobar, ushered him to one of the table's empty chairs.

The room had fallen silent now. Most of its occupants were staring at the newcomer with open but friendly curiosity. Most of them drifted to the conference table and took seats.

The Supreme Technician took his place at the table's head. He said, "First of all, let us thank you for your efforts."

"My efforts?" Rex Morris repeated inanely.

"Yes. You see, they were directed to a most worthy end and one we pursue ourselves." He cleared his throat. "Although your methods were somewhat more enthusiastic, let us say."

Rex Morris caught hold of himself enough to blurt indignantly. "My efforts were ultimately aimed at ending the Technate!"

"Ummm," John McFarlane nodded, "so are ours."

Rex Morris stared at him. Absolutely nothing made sense.

"Let's have some background," an overweight, elderly man clad in robes said from across the table. With a shock Rex Morris realized it was the Supreme Bishop of the Temple.

"Yes, obviously," McFarlane nodded. He turned to Rex again. "I don't know to what extent you've studied the history of revolution down through the ages. Even a comparatively brief examination of the subject reveals that the modern revolutionary finds himself in a unique position. You do consider yourself a revolutionist, of course?"

"I suppose so," Rex said defiantly. He kept his eyes on the older man's face.

"In the past," the Supreme Technician went on, "revolutions were accomplished by dissatisfied, enraged masses, contrary to some popular belief that would put them at the door of small groups of malcontents." He pursed his lips. "There are any number of examples. Jefferson, Madison, Franklin, Washington and the other so-called Revolutionary Forefa-

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thers, found themselves hard put to run fast enough to stay out in front of the revolting colonists. Robespierre, Danton and Marat were pushed by the mob into their feudalism destroying stands. More recent is the Russian example. Lenin and Zinoviev were in Switzerland when the Soviets began to form, Trotsky was in New York and Stalin, a third stringer at that time, was in exile in Siberia. They had to move fast to get back to Petrograd and take over the reins thrown to them."

He shrugged. "I suppose the point is made. To get to our own times, we find a unique situation. *There is no downtrodden mass of dissatisfied slaves, serfs or proletarians.* A fundamental change in our society is demanded by historical necessity but the overwhelming majority of our population are at present content with institutions as they are."

"This doesn't make sense," Rex Morris said bitterly. "If you, yourselves, are opposed to this form of government, why not resign? Under the Technate our culture is stagnating like never before in modern history."

McFarlane nodded. "Correct. But resign to what end? Would our resignations abolish the Technate? Obviously not. There are a thousand, a million, others willing to step into our positions." He twisted his mouth wryly. "Matt Edgeworth is an example."

Rex Morris sank back into his chair. He wished he had more time for thought. He was being pushed confusingly fast.

"There's another element here," McFarlane said thoughtfully, "that possibly you've never considered. When fundamental changes begin to take place in a social system, those who inaugurate them are not always spared the ultimate results. Using the Russian example again, we have the elements who originally precipitated the revolt against the Czar. I am speaking of Kerensky, who represented the liberal Social Democrats who wished to abolish feudalism and establish a government based on Western lines. But the revolution got out of hand, once it began to move, and Kerensky found himself a fugitive and his government as much in the discard as was that of the Czar."

"I don't get your point," Rex said, although he was beginning to.

McFarlane said dryly, "Once in control of a governmental system, it is not always easy to relinquish it safely, even though you so desire. While we of the Congress of Prime Technicians subscribe to the belief that the Technate must go, we are not anxious to sacrifice ourselves, physically, in the going. Your own pseudo-nihilistic measures were actually not meant to do more than startle our people into movement—but the next rev-

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olutionist who comes along might be of more ambitious designs."

Rex thought about that.

The Prime Technician of the Entertainment FS, seated at the other end of the long table, said, "And before it was all over, you yourself, Rex Morris, and possibly the members of your family, might find themselves lined up against a handy wall."

And Rex thought about that for a moment.

He blurted suddenly, "Why, all these years, have you persecuted my father? From what you're saying, you feel much the same as he does."

"Exactly the same," the Supreme Bishop said agreeably.

John McFarlane said, "Who in the whole land was better suited than Leonard Morris to defy our conventions, sneer at our fear of controversial subjects, our conforming, our horror at the very idea of any change in the status quo? As our sole surviving Hero of the Technate he is untouchable. Leonard was the spark that enabled a thousand speakeasies to open their doors, who set a million nonconforming tongues to wagging. It's at least a step."

The door by which Rex Morris and Elizabeth Mihm had entered fifteen minutes earlier, opened behind them. Rex's eyes went to it, and then widened.

"Hello, son," the newcomer said.

"Dad!"

The old boy grinned at him. "I wish you'd discussed your project with me a bit before you took off, boy. On a hurry up call, I just came in from Taos on the rocket."

Rex Morris was on his feet. "I . . . I thought you'd suffered enough. I wanted any possible consequences to be on me alone."

His father chuckled. "Well, at least we know where you stand. I've never been really sure, which is the prime reason I never told you about the existence of this . . . speakeasy, club . . ." he chuckled again, and looked around at the room's occupants ". . . or what would you call it, an underground cell?"

Everyone laughed. Leonard Morris had the ability to lighten the mood. The Prime Technician who had been seated next to Rex relinquished his chair to the noted scientist and found another.

John McFarlane came around the table to shake hands, exchange a dozen words with the older Morris, and then resumed his place.

"Let us proceed," he said. "To sum up, our impetuous young friend Rex Morris is of the opinion that under the Technate man stagnates. We agree. Friend Rex, on his own initiative, arrived at the conclusion that sparks must be struck to bring the average citizen, Techno, Engineer or Effective, out of his mental rut and be made to realize that the present hierar-

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chical governmental form must not be permanent. We agree. Thus far, we have been somewhat hesitant in our efforts. We have tolerated, indeed, have secretly encouraged, the speakeasy where anyone can become as controversial as he wishes and where the most extreme ideas can be expressed. We have encouraged the growth of the so-called gossip news commentators, who in the name of humor and entertainment snipe at our institutions. Obviously, however, this is not enough. We must increase our efforts and attract new and aggressive blood." He looked about the table. "Perhaps a motion is in order."

Prime Technician Warren Klein came to his feet. "I make a motion that upon my resignation, Techno Rex Morris be appointed Prime Technician of the Security FS." A wan smile touched his pale lips. "And while I'm standing, I might as well tender my resignation, something I've looked forward to for several years."

Rex Morris was on his feet again. "Great Scott!" he blurted.

Elizabeth Mihm was looking on him amusedly. Even in all the turmoil of his thoughts, he found time to wonder how he could ever have thought her less than cool, efficient and hard headed. She said, "But Rex, dear boy, you came to our city—didn't you?—looking for an appointment. You've reached the age when you must do your share of the Technate's work. You have ten years of your life to devote to society."

He glared at her. "Prime Technician! Why, I don't know *anything* about the Security Functional Sequence." He cased his eyes wildly around the table. "Are you all mad?"

John McFarlane said seriously, "We have effectives and we have engineers who can handle details most efficiently. What we need, Rex Morris, is a man of principle and ideal to sit with us here at the highest level—and plan the ending of our social system. You fill the qualifications. The other obligations of your office can be learned."

"And I'd be over all such security officials as, well, Matt Edgeworth?"

Warren Klein said slowly, "Don't underestimate the value of our Matt Edgeworths. At least such men have ambition, drive, courage and—dreams. It is possibly of such types that the new society will be formed."

"What new society?" Rex said desperately. "You're throwing these punches faster than I can assimilate them. What do you have in mind for the future? What will the new government look like?"

His father looked at him strangely. "We're the ruling class, son. Radical social change, peaceful or otherwise, doesn't come

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about from the top down. No matter how weary those on top might be. It comes from the bottom up."

"You mean you don't know?"

The Supreme Bishop said gently, "Within our own group here, we have a half dozen theories. Undoubtedly, within the speakeasies and wherever else men exchange ideas, new ones will be proposed. It remains to be seen what our people as a whole will ultimately turn to."

Rex Morris sat back in his chair still once again. He said, as though talking to himself, "I came here to confront the Supreme Technician. To tell him that the government was corrupt. To warn him of Matt Edgeworth. To warn him that Warren Klein himself was tolerating the speakeasies. To throw up to him that the Technate was rotten from within and demand that changes be allowed. That and similar things I came to shout at him. And what do I wind up with . . .?"

John McFarlane said to his assembled Prime Technicians, "If there are no objections, the motion of Warren Klein will be passed and Rex Morris be appointed Prime Technician of Security."

The meeting broke up into smaller groups who took their turns in shaking hands with their new member of Congress. Each spoke a few words. Each offered their congratulations.

His mind still awhirl, as quickly as he could Rex got Warren Klein aside. The former security head, seeing the younger man's confusion, chuckled and said, "Don't worry about it. I'll stick around for awhile showing you the ropes. You'll have little trouble."

Rex said, "Fine, but look, there's something immediate. There's a call out by Matt Edgeworth for any Security FS man to shoot me on sight."

Klein pursed his lips and nodded. "That's right, I'd forgotten. I didn't catch the thing myself. I'll get on the phone and put things right."

Rex said worriedly, "He put it on every screen in this part of the country and worded it in such a way that anyone with a gun would start firing immediately. And another thing. You can't get any more ambitious than Edgeworth and he's not going to take kindly to my being put above him, particularly in view of the fact that he sounded off with some of his opportunistic ambitions to me."

"I see. Hmmm, yes, Matt was always on the impetuous side." Warren Klein hesitated, then called to the Supreme Technician who was standing nearby talking to Elizabeth Mihm, in light tones. "John, could we speak to you?"

He explained the situation and John McFarlane nodded and said easily, "No problem. We'll go over to the Security FS building and

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you, Warren, can introduce me on a Technate-wide broadcast. I'll say a few words, announce that a great mistake has been made. We'll lay the onus on the shoulders of our ambitious Technician Edgeworth, remove him from his position, and bring the whole matter to a quick close."

"Obviously the thing to do," Warren Klein agreed. "I'll order up your car, sir."

They retraced the route by which Elizabeth Mihm had brought Rex to the Supreme Technician's palace, hardly more than an hour before, stepping into John McFarlane's chauffeur driven limosine at the back door, and then driving around to the front portico and hence to the street. The three of them sat in the back, and to Rex's jumbled mind the conversation seemed idiotically light in view of the great moment of the situation. Life simply was not moving fast enough for him. He was burning with eagerness to get this confounded matter over with, and to get into really deep, significant conversations with everybody from his father to the Supreme Bishop of the Temple.

They whipped out the entry gates and headed for the skyscraper which housed the Security FS.

The car slammed to a sudden halt, and for a few whirlwind split moments life for Rex Morris became brief snatches of impressions . . . Matt Edgeworth with some strange, large-calibered weapon cuddled in his arms, standing spread-legged in the street . . . a squad of Security Junior Engineers and Senior Effectives behind him, all heavily armed, all large, brutal looking types . . . the chauffeur jumping from the car and snatching for a holstered hand weapon, and then crumbling, cut almost completely in half . . . something black being thrown toward the car, even as Rex and Warren Klein tried to climb out through the door on the far side from Edgeworth and his men, but being handicapped by the bloody, inert body of the Supreme Technician . . .

And then a great, searing, world of yellow and orange flame and a unique, unbearable, all encompassing pain . . .

And then it was all over and it could be left to others to accomplish a revolution, peaceful or otherwise, against the Technate of North America. Rex Morris no longer cared. ◄

Answers—"Do You Know Your Elements?"—p. 64 a-7, b-6, c-10, d-1, e-9, f-11, g-4, h-2, i-5, j-8, k-3

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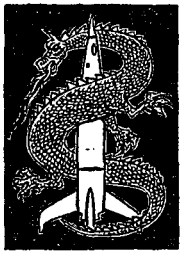
EDITORIAL



From time to time we have been accused of writing the letters we from time to time quote on this page. Such a base canard deserves no denial and so we move briskly on to an item bearing the postmark of a small town in the Pennsylvania Dutch country. "Sir; in regards to your editorial in November magazine, it finally makes me take up my pen and write you. I have been a long time reader of this type of magazine dabled a bit with Amazing and Wierd Tales but became a steady reader with Astonding by what ever its name was then and the late and lamented Unknown. ¶ But of late you have been following the purple cow over the hill under the bridge down the creek behind the mill. The green monkeys howel in the green sunlight by the dark of the moon. ¶ Make sense so do most of your stories of late. I read for relaxation I dont care whetеher its Science fiction or fantasey. I want it to hang to gether and for at least while I am reading it to sell me to make me believe that it might be. I dont care for the trend with you and some of your compeditors this modern thing, these wanderings like modern art, these excersices in word pictures of nothing. They may be wonderfull to some people but not to me, I still buy out of habit but I am not going to continue to throw fourty cents worth of paper away that I have got ten cents worth of reading out of much longer." This, we submit, is Criticism, and if we could write as cogently and colorfully ourself we would double both our rates and our audience. Meanwhile, we will try to take these words to heart. Purple cows, stay away from our door.

In our introduction to Robert Sheckley's THE JOURNEY OF JOENES (October and November, 1962), we quoted Mr. Anthony Boucher's words from *his* introduction to Mr. Sheckley's short story THE MONSTERS (March, 1953), "It is hard to believe that someone so *completely* human could report so concisely, yet so thoroughly, the essentials of an alien race's mores and psychology as Mr. Sheckley does." Promptly from Indiana demands Mr. Sam Stuart, Jr., "How does Anthony know this? What is his criterion? Tell me, what does Anthony *really* look like?" Well, we'll tell you, Sam—he looks pert, oracular, and mellow, like a man who can rise to any occasion—including that created by your question (which we neatly sidestep)—and we look forward to his reply.

— Avram Davidson

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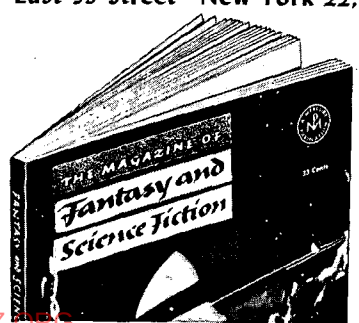

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